

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ILLIANA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
1900 East Main Street
Danville, IL 61832

MCM Number: 05-13

Expiration Date: 6/2020
Issue Date: 6/2015

DRESS CODE

I. PURPOSE:

To establish policy, procedure and responsibilities for appropriate on-duty attire and personal hygiene for VA Illiana Health Care System (VAIHCS) employees and others who serve in an official capacity and represent VAIHCS. This includes house staff, trainees, contracted and fee-basis employees, volunteers, work-study employees, and vocational rehabilitation employees.

II. POLICY:

A. VAIHCS strives to be both an employer of choice and a provider of choice. Every employee and representative should present a positive and professional appearance to the patients and other members of the public we serve. Personal cleanliness, appearance, professionalism and safety are important employee and organizational responsibilities. For this reason, anything considered to be offensive, distracting, or not in the best interest of VAIHCS will not be permitted. Each employee reflects VAIHCS's image.

B. No policy can anticipate all the potential styles and choices employees may make. The following policy is presented as guidelines applicable to all staff. Due to variation in functioning, such as level of direct patient contact, work environment and safety concerns each service will develop additional guidelines consistent with this policy to assist employees in determining appropriate function and appearance.

III. PROCEDURES:

C. Guidelines for appearance

1. *Hygiene & Grooming:* Representatives of VAIHCS are expected to be clean and odor-free. Due to close contact with patients and customers, the use of scents and fragrances should be minimal to prevent or create a potential reaction by patients and other staff members. Fingernails must be clean and of a reasonable length. Due to infection control policy and information from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), artificial nails (as referenced in MCM 11-40) are prohibited in direct patient care areas.

2. *Accessories:* Jewelry will be conservative and reflect a professional appearance. It should not, contain offensive material, or present a safety hazard. Dangling earrings and necklaces should not be worn in patient care areas or around machinery. Political campaign buttons are prohibited.

3. *Name Badges:* Name badges provided by VAIHCS must be worn at all times while on duty and in an upright and readable position with the employee's name and picture visible on the upper torso. Business related pins may be worn on the lariat as long as they don't cover the employee's name or picture or pierce any informational media (i.e.: mag strip or bar code). Police Officers in uniform will wear the Department of VA issued badge and name plate in lieu of employee ID badge.

4. *Clothing:* Staff are expected to dress professionally and appropriately for their specific job. Employees should consider each day's activities when determining what to wear. Supervisors and managers can specify additional dress and grooming requirements based on the business needs of their departments, or based on safety and health considerations. All attire must be neat, clean and in good condition. Discretion should be used as to length and fit of clothing. Skirts should be no shorter than 2 inches above the knee nor should clothing be revealing. Clothing should not be torn or frayed. Blue denim jeans are not acceptable in the VAIHCS work environment, unless approved by the Director for special events, recognitions, etc. Clothing should not distract from the mission of the VAIHCS, but should promote it by providing a professional atmosphere for patient care. Hats, hoods, or sunglasses are considered inappropriate indoor apparel unless required as a protective measure for the duties being performed or as part of the work uniform.

5. *Shoes:* All footwear will be appropriate to the employee's position. The Safety Officer is available to make determinations of safety concerns in specific settings. All shoes, including sneakers, are to be kept clean and neat and appropriate to the work area. Flip flops and house shoes are not allowed. Employees are required to comply with service footwear policies along with the requirements set forth in this policy.

6. *Earphones/headphones:* Earphones or headphones associated with electrical devices such as radios, I-Pods, MP3 players and televisions are not appropriate in patient care areas and hallways of the workplace. Personally owned electronic tablets and cell phones are not appropriate in patient care areas. Cell phone use should be used according to **MCM IRM-13**. These do not promote good communication between patients and staff nor do they promote a safe, caring and professional atmosphere for our customers.

7. *Uniforms:* Uniforms will be worn as required by MCM 137-03.

8. *Exceptions* to the dress code can be made in certain circumstances. If a medical condition exists, and an employee provides medical documentation from his/her physician stating the length of time and the type of accommodation. Standards of reasonable accommodation will apply. The Director may approve activities or events that allow special items of clothing; i.e., dress down or casual days, holidays, theme attire, etc. For unusual activities such as moving or major cleaning, appropriate accommodations may be made (e.g., blue jeans) by the supervisor of the area.

Reasonable accommodations may be made for employees with properly documented religious and/or ethnic needs without undue hardship to the conduct of VAIHCS programs. Requests for exceptions should be made through the Service Chief to the Director.

D. Responsibilities:

1. Service Chiefs will be responsible for outlining a service-level policy providing guidance for the type of work performed and the specific type of employees and representative in the work area. Service Chiefs, managers, and supervisors will implement, ensure compliance with, and enforce the provisions of this policy within their respective services and sections. A reasonable person standard should be used in determining adherence to this policy. Managers and supervisors will hold private, personal, and verbal counseling sessions with employees who are not dressed in a reasonable and appropriate manner during their tour of duty.

2 VAIHCS employees will be familiar with, and adhere to, this dress code and its requirements. All employees must be responsible for their individual behavior as it pertains to organizational policies, procedures, and in support of organizational goals.

E. Policy Compliance: Employees not appropriately attired for work by the standards of this medical center memorandum or service level policy will be asked to change their attire to conform. If this requires them to leave the medical center, they will be charged with Annual Leave or Leave without Pay until they return. Repeated failure to follow this policy, whether it is offensive, excessively distracting, or in direct conflict with this policy, may result in disciplinary or adverse action.

IV. REFERENCES:

VA Handbook 5007 and 5011, 5 USC Chapter 51 and 5 USC Chapter 55

V. RESCISSION: None

/s/

Diana Carranza, FACHE
Acting Director

Attachment A

Attachment A:

Examples of Prohibited Medical Center Attire:

- Baggy or low-worn trousers exposing any portion of undergarments
- Shorts of any type
- Overly casual pants, such as pajamas, athletic wear, sweat pants, blue denim jeans, wind suits, and knit yoga pants.

Note: Fleece or sweatshirt material zip up hoodies are permissible and not considered athletic wear.

- Clothing with offensive logos
- Clothing that is seductive or revealing such as halter tops, midriffs or crop tops, spaghetti tops and tank tops

Examples of Work-Specific Requirements (Service Policies will supplement these examples)

- No open toed shoes in patient care, research, labor and shop areas
- Hair must not exceed shoulder length or must be pulled back when working with patients or around machinery
- Artificial and overlay fingernails are not allowed in direct patient care areas