



Team Name: Pharmacy and Therapeutics	Reference Number: CLI.6010.PL.024
Team Lead: Regional Director - Pharmacy	Program Area: Pharmacy and Therapeutics
Approved by: VP – Medical Services	Policy Section: General
Issue Date: June 28 2018 Review Date: Revision Date: March 28 2019	Subject: Handling of Suspected Illicit Substance

POLICY SUBJECT:

Handling of Suspected Illicit Substances

PURPOSE:

1. To provide guidance to staff regarding the safe Handling of Suspected Illicit Substance found on Southern Health-Santé Sud property or in the patient’s belongings. Refer to Handling of Suspected Illicit Substances Frequently Asked Questions CLI.6010.PL.024.SD.02.
2. To maintain and protect the patient’s right to confidentiality.
3. To provide the patient with a mechanism to apply for the return of property, in accordance with the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*.

BOARD POLICY REFERENCE:

Executive Limitation (EL-2) Treatment of Clients

APPLICATION:

This policy applies to all employees, students, volunteers and other persons acting on behalf of Southern Health-Santé Sud.

POLICY:

1. Southern Health-Santé Sud staff who become aware that a patient may be in possession of a Suspected Illicit Substance should immediately notify their supervisor.
2. Where it is safe to do so, staff may request that the patient remove the Suspected Illicit Substance from the facility.
3. Except in circumstances where:
 - 3.1 The presence of a Suspected Illicit Substance creates a serious and immediate threat to the safety of Southern Health-Santé Sud staff, patients or others;

- 3.2 It is necessary to remove the Suspected Illicit Substance in order to provide medical treatment to the patient; or
- 3.3 The patient consents,
Southern Health-Santé Sud staff should not remove a Suspected Illicit Substance from the patient or the patient's belongings.
4. Consideration should be given to whether reporting the Suspected Illicit Substance to law enforcement is appropriate, in accordance with the procedure below.
5. An occurrence report related to the incident should be prepared in accordance with the Procedure below.
6. Suspected Illicit Substances which are:
 - 6.1 Removed from the patient by staff; or
 - 6.2 Voluntarily surrendered by the patient,will be packaged and forwarded to the pharmacy following the procedure below.
7. The pharmacy will be responsible for storing and destroying Suspected Illicit Substances as per the Narcotics and Controlled Drugs policy's Destruction of Narcotics and Controlled Drugs.
8. Any patient requesting the return of their Suspected Illicit Substance shall be referred to law enforcement, as set out in section 11 of the Procedure below. Southern Health-Santé Sud staff shall never return to a patient a Suspected Illicit Substance that has been removed from or surrendered by the patient.

DEFINITIONS:

Suspected Illicit Substance: A substance which is reasonably suspected by Southern Health-Santé Sud staff to be a controlled substance listed on Schedules I, II, III, IV or V of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and for which the patient does not have a valid prescription to possess.

PROCEDURE:

1. Inform the patient of the purpose, procedure, Suspected Illicit Substance Algorithm CLI.6010.PL.024.SD.01 and options for removal of Suspected Illicit Substance:
 - 1.1 The patient/family may remove suspected illicit drug from the facility;
 - 1.2 If the patient is unable or refuses, proceed with the Procedure steps below, provided that, where the patient is ambulatory and withholding health care would not present an immediate risk to the patient's health, Southern Health-Santé Sud may require the patient to leave the facility, if she or he will not remove the substance;
 - 1.3 Searches of patients or seizures of Suspected Illicit Substances can only occur if required within the context of providing care; where necessary to prevent an immediate and serious threat to the safety of staff, patients or anyone else; or if the patient consents; and
 - 1.4 In the event of conflict, refer to your supervisor and/or the facility's security team.
2. The Health Care Provider will document clinically relevant information to the care of the client and verbal consents given on removal of product without giving any specifics identifying the Suspected Illicit Substance in the integrated patient notes (IPN).

3. Where the presence of a Suspected Illicit Substance creates an immediate and serious threat to the safety of staff, patients or anyone else, law enforcement should be notified in accordance with section 11 of the Procedure below.
 4. Initiate an occurrence report to describe the circumstances of the discovery of the Suspected Illicit Substance include the bag's identity number
 5. Place the Suspected Illicit Substance in a clear sealable bag, with tamper proof packaging utilizing personal protective equipment when handling the unknown substance.
 6. **DO NOT** label the bag with any information that would reveal the identity of the patient. **DO NOT** note the patient's name, initials, PHIN or hospital number on the bag. Label the bag with the date and a series of numbers (e.g. 05SEP2017 – 1 of 1) – this becomes the bag's identity number.
 7. Complete the Suspected Illicit Substances Transfer Form CLI.6010.PL.024.FORM.01. The original of this Transfer Form must accompany the sealed bag at all times. The following information must be documented:
 - 7.1 Discovery or confiscation date;
 - 7.2 The date (which must match the date on the sealed bag);
 - 7.3 A factual description of the Suspected Illicit Substance (e.g. form, color, approximate quantity);
 - 7.4 The name and signature of the person discovering or removing the Suspected Illicit Substance from the unit, property or patient;
 - 7.5 The name and signature of a witness to the discovery or removal; and
 - 7.6 The name and signature of all persons who transfer or receive the sealed bag.
- NOTE: Never include patient identifiers on the Transfer Form.** The Transfer Form documents only the handling and transfer of the Suspected Illicit Substance between, nursing, pharmacy and the police. Patient information must remain confidential. **Never speculate or refer to the identity of the Suspected Illicit Substance.** **Always use descriptive terms only.** Describe the appearance of the Suspected Illicit Substance only (e.g. "unidentified white powder" or "dried leafy plant material", etc.).
8. The staff member will transfer the Suspected Illicit Substance to the pharmacy department. If this incident occurs during off hours (when pharmacy staff is not available), place the sealed bag together with the Transfer Form in the locked narcotic drawer or cupboard on the unit. Document this information on the Transfer Form and transfer the Suspected Illicit Substance to the pharmacy department at the first available opportunity.
 9. The pharmacy will secure the Suspected Illicit Substance in the narcotic vault.
 10. Once the Suspected Illicit Substance is securely stored in the narcotic vault, staff may:
 - 10.1 Destroy the Suspected Illicit Substance, and document the same, in accordance with Narcotics and Controlled Drugs policy CLI.6010.PL.015 on Destruction of Narcotics and Controlled Drugs, at least 4 weeks after the patient has been discharged, provided that:
 - 10.1.1 The local police department must first be notified in accordance with section 10 of the Procedure below and given a reasonable opportunity to attend to the site to take the Suspected Illicit Substance prior to its destruction. Records documenting the destruction must be retained for a period of time according to legislation.

- 10.1.2 If staff are aware of an ongoing police investigation to which the Suspected Illicit Substance might be relevant, staff shall not destroy the substance and must instead notify the local police department in accordance with section 10 of the Procedure below; or
- 10.2 Notify the local police department in accordance with section 10 of the Procedure below and request the local police department's assistance with the removal of the Suspected Illicit Substance. **DO NOT** transport the Suspected Illicit Substance to police.
11. Prior to notification to law enforcement, the Suspected Illicit Substance shall be transferred to site supervisor and/or on-site security, who shall then notify law enforcement. Such a report may contain:
- 11.1 The date and time of Southern Health-Santé Sud staff's discovery of the Suspected Illicit Substance in the patient's possession, and a brief description of how the Suspected Illicit Substance was discovered; and
- 11.2 A brief factual description of the Suspected Illicit Substance, without speculating as to the identity of the Suspected Illicit Substance.
- Such a report should **NOT** contain information which identifies the patient (e.g., name, initials, PHIN or hospital number). Southern Health-Santé Sud staff should consult with their supervisor and/or the privacy officer before any information which could identify a patient is disclosed to law enforcement or any other third party.
12. Never return to the patient or anyone acting on behalf of the patient Suspected Illicit Substances which have been removed from or surrendered by the patient. If requested by a patient or if deemed appropriate by the pharmacy, the pharmacy will arrange for the confiscated Suspected Illicit Substance to be transferred to the local police detachment. Refer the patient to the police to voluntarily disclose his or her identity and to request the return of the Suspected Illicit Substance in accordance with the provisions of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

- CLI.6010.PL.024.FORM.01 Suspected Illicit Substance Transfer Form
CLI.6010.PL.024.SD.01 Suspected Illicit Substance Algorithm
CLI.6010.PL.024.SD.02 Suspected Illicit Substance Frequently Asked Questions

REFERENCES:

- Government of Canada (accessed September 2017)
website <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-38.8/>. *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (S.C. 1996, c. 19)
- College of Pharmacists of British Columbia (accessed September 2017) Guidelines for Handling Suspected Illicit Substances in Hospitals. Website
http://library.bcpharmacists.org/6_Resources/6-5_Pharmacy_Resources/5066-Handling_Suspected_Illicit_Substances_in_Hosp_Guidelines.pdf.