



Department of Veterans Affairs

Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System
New Orleans, LA 70112

Numbered Memorandum

05-22
March 1, 2010

DRESS CODE

1. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this memorandum is to establish policy, procedures and responsibilities for attire, personal hygiene and grooming in the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System (SLVHCS). The personal appearance of all employees contributes to the overall image of the SLVHCS as a provider of quality health care. It is the policy of the SLVHCS that employees wear appropriate clothing suitable to the professional healthcare environment and maintain standards of personal hygiene and grooming that promote safety and enhance infection control.

2. **POLICY:**

a. For the purpose of this Numbered Memorandum, "employee" includes both full and part-time employees of the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System, volunteers, trainees and workers who receive a stipend or salary from a source other than VA appropriated funds, individuals serving the VA in a Without Compensation (WOC) status, or under one of the federally sponsored youth assistance programs, and patients or members assigned duties in a therapeutic program.

b. Employees who are required to wear uniforms shall wear the complete uniform while in a duty status. Employees who are not required to wear uniforms are expected to wear clothing that is suitable for a business or health care environment and present a clean and neat appearance.

3. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

a. Service Chiefs and Supervisors are responsible for explaining the policy and ensuring that employees comply with the policy.

b. All Employees are responsible for compliance with the guidelines contained in this policy. Employees should be aware of dress expectations for their work area and meet those expectations. New employees should adhere to this policy from their first day forward. If employees have questions about the appropriateness of any particular dress item or this policy, they should discuss it with their supervisor.

c. If new employees are dressed inappropriately at New Employee Orientation, a member of the Workforce Development staff will notify the appropriate Service. The Service Chief or designee will explain the policy and ensure the employee presents for duty in appropriate attire the next day.

4. **PROCEDURES:** The following guidelines are provided for clothing, accessories, grooming and

personal hygiene.

a. Grooming & Attire:

(1) Hair should be clean and in keeping with the professional environment of the SLVHCS.

(2) Clothing should be neat, clean, properly fitted and in good condition. Sheer and/or revealing clothing is not allowed; proper undergarments must be worn. Undershirts, tank tops or muscle shirts should not be worn as outer wear. In addition, the following items should not be worn: jeans, shorts, capris, sweat suits, walking shorts, spaghetti straps, strapless attire, spandex and sundresses. No item of clothing shall include inappropriate slogans, illustrations, or advertising. Examples include but are not limited to clothing that promotes or displays alcohol, tobacco products, drugs; partisan political views; or clothing that degrades individuals based on sex, sexual orientation, age, race, national origin, and religion.

(3) T-shirts, polo-style shirts and other clothing items with slogans may be worn for special events and other occasions authorized by SLVHCS (examples: Human Resources Management office team shirts, NFFE and AFGE union shirts, SLVHCS award shirts, Patient/Nursing Care Services shirts etc.).

(4) Should an employee's clothing or uniform become soiled during the course of duty, the employee will be allowed reasonable time to clean up and/or change clothes, as appropriate.

(5) Nails must be clean, neatly trimmed, well-manicured and of a length that will not cause injury or potential injury to self, patients or co-workers. All health care workers who provide direct, hands-on care to patients as well as employees reprocessing instruments and equipment are not to wear artificial nails, nail extenders and nail jewelry. Nails will be no longer than ¼ inch from the tip of the finger when working in direct patient care.

(6) For employees providing direct, hands-on care to patients, nail polish must be without chips or cracks. Employees providing direct hands-on care who are found to have polish with chips or cracks will be required, by their immediate supervisor, to remove it immediately. This includes non-supervisory and supervisory employees who regularly or occasionally provide direct, hands-on care to patients.

(7) The use of perfumes and colognes can be unpleasant to others or cause allergic reactions and is discouraged except in moderation.

(8) Tattoos, if visible, should not be offensive in nature.

(9) The wearing of jewelry should reflect a professional appearance. Where safety is a concern more stringent standards may apply.

(10) Shoes should be clean, safe and compatible with assigned duties. Flip-flops and other shoes not intended for a business or health care environment are prohibited. Staff in patient care positions must wear enclosed shoes in all patient care areas.

(11) Hats, caps and other head coverings should not be worn while on duty in any patient care area and should be removed while providing service to the public, unless required as a protective measure for the duties being performed.

b. Uniforms: Employees authorized to wear uniforms will do so in accordance with the procedures described in Numbered Memorandum 90-37, Employee Uniform and VHA Handbook 1850.4 Employee Uniforms.

c. Headsets: Hands-free personal cell phones and other non-work related headsets should not be worn while on duty in any patient care area and should be removed while providing service to the public, unless required as a protective measure for the duties being performed; (examples: Blue Tooth, headsets should not be used in the work area; however, headsets can be used if purchased by SLVHCS).

d. Protective attire: Shoe covers, masks, gloves, isolation gowns, patient gowns, etc. will be worn only for their intended purpose and must remain in the patient care areas where they are used.

e. ID Badges: Identification badges must be worn at all times with the employee's name and photograph clearly visible.

f. Exceptions: Reasonable accommodation may be made for employees based on religious needs when such accommodation can be made without undue hardship to the conduct of SLVHCS programs. Deviations from this policy due to a medical condition will require administratively acceptable medical certification, which must include a time period for the exception.

g. Compliance:

(1) When employees are in conflict with the established dress code policy, a good faith effort will be made with the employee; union representative, when applicable; and Supervisor to resolve the conflict at the lowest level (for clarification contact the Human Resources Employee Relations/Labor Relations Section at extension 1407).

(2) Employees who are not in compliance with this policy will be considered as "NOT READY" for work and will not be allowed to remain on duty. For a first instance of non-compliance, the supervisor will permit the employee a reasonable amount of annual leave to change clothing. For subsequent instances, supervisors will consider the circumstances, and may allow the employee to take annual leave to change clothing. However, appropriate administrative action may also be taken based on continued non-compliance.

5. **RESCISSIONS**: Not Applicable.

6. **REFERENCES**: Numbered Memorandum 90-37, Employee Uniforms, dated August 03, 2009; 11-63, Infection Control, dated August 12, 2007; VHA Directive 2005-002, Required Hand Hygiene Practices, dated January 13, 2005; VA Handbook 5021, Employee/Management Relations, dated April 15, 2002; VA Handbook 7176, Supply, Processing, and Distribution (SPD) Operational Requirements, dated August 16, 2002; Master Agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the American Federation of Government Employees, effective March 21, 1997; Labor-Management

Agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Council of Veterans Administration Locals, National Federation of Federal Employees, effective May 1997.

7. **FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY**: Chief, Human Resources Management (05)

8. **EXPIRATION DATE**: November 2013.

(signed)

Julie A. Catellier

Director

SUMMATION OF POLICY & PROCEDURE CHANGES: None.