

Safekeeping and Return of Resident Belongings in Long-Term Care

Site Applicability

All Providence Health Care (PHC) Long-Term Care Homes.

Practice Level

Basic

Need to Know

- All residents or their Substitute Decision Maker will be informed of the policy and procedure for the care of valuables and other belongings while the resident resides in a PHC long-term care home.
- Residents are responsible for all valuables and other belongings kept in their possession. Valuables generally consist of jewelry, electronics, and in situations where residents can manage their own finances, some cash.
- In some instances, self-identified Indigenous residents may bring items of cultural significance that are considered highly valuable (e.g., Eagle Feathers; Traditional Medicines such as Cedar, Sage or Sweet Grass; Abalone Shell; or Drums). It is not appropriate to touch these items unless given permission to do so by the resident. It is not appropriate to ask to touch these items.
- Residents are encouraged to keep only small amounts of cash with them and to access additional comfort funds through petty cash, which is safely managed by site administration.

Guiding Principles

- All residents and their belongings will be treated with dignity, respect, and care.
- Respect for a loved one's memory will be maintained when greeting families who are picking up belongings of a deceased resident.
- Staff will acknowledge the difficult process of returning belongings to families of residents who have died and treat each situation with empathy and compassion.
- Open communication will be maintained with families following a resident death.

Equipment and Supplies

Admission

- Record of Admission form

Discharge or transfer to another long-term care home

- Transfer form

Death

- Inventory form;
- White plastic "personal belongings" bag(s);
- Clear view poly self-seal bag(s). This type of bag allows for easy viewing of contents and is sealed to prevent tampering. The front side allows the user to list contents of the bag;
- Labels;
- Plastic Storage bins if applicable (such as in sites with COVID-19 outbreak); alternately a suitcase or duffel bag;
- Checklist for packing resident belongings.



Procedure

Admission of the Resident to Long-Term Care

- Explain PHC's Safe Keeping of Patient Valuables policy to the resident and/or their family. Upon request, provide a copy of the policy.
- Ask family members to take valuables home if at all possible.
- Personal valuables kept by the resident will be the responsibility of the resident. Have the resident or person legally qualified to give consent initial the Record of Admission form – Loss of Valuables

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section. This section states that the resident (or signatory) understands that PHC will not be responsible for valuables kept by the resident if they are lost or stolen.

- The Personal Belongings form must be accurately completed, listing all of the resident's valuables deposited in safe keeping. The form must be witnessed and signed by the resident or authorized signatory and a staff member. This form should be updated each time the resident adds or removes items from storage.
- In long-term care homes with access to a cashier, valuables may be stored there. In all other situations, the long-term care home must determine a secure place for the safekeeping of valuables
- Explain any relevant Covid-19 procedures in place to protect staff, residents and families in relation to personal belongings.

Discharge or Transfer of the Resident to another Long-Term Care Home

- If a resident is transferred to another long-term care home or living arrangement, the resident's family will pack and move all belongings.
- If family are not available to assist with the move, staff will assist with packing the resident's belongings. When possible, the resident should be present when their belongings are being packed. Belongings will be sent with the resident.

Returning Belongings following the Death of a Resident

- Valuables and other personal items belonging to a deceased resident need to be gathered, inventoried, documented, witnessed and deposited in safekeeping, as guided by the appropriate Checklist for Packing Resident Belongings until the belongings can be released to the authorized person.
- Inventory information is kept by the Social Worker, CNL or Site Leader as determined by each LTC home.

In the event that family is present for the death

- If family is present for the death, they may pack the belongings they wish to keep and should provide direction to the staff for any items they do not wish to take. In most circumstances, the family should be responsible for the disposal of all personal belongings.
- Being sensitive to the family's loss and at an appropriate time, the family should be notified of any costs associated with the disposal of personal belongings if they are not picked up by the family and the long-term care home is unable to absorb these costs.
- If the family wishes to donate items such as wheelchairs or other rehabilitation equipment to the long-term care home, this will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- There may be unique circumstances that affect the release of belongings to family members. For example, in the case of a death due to COVID-19, there is a 7 day waiting period before any items can be removed. Extenuating circumstances that result in a change from usual practice should be carefully explained to families at the earliest appropriate time.

In the event that family is restricted from visiting or unable to be present at the time of death

- Valuables are packed and labeled in separate, clear, self-seal envelopes. Do not use brown envelopes or other Ziploc/plastic bags. Under no circumstances should garbage bags be used.
- If valuables are left on the resident, document this in the health record, e.g., gold band ring on right hand index finger.
- The following items should be properly discarded and the rationale for discarding these items should be explained to the family:
 - Perishable items such as food, flowers
 - Makeup
 - Biohazardous items such as those contaminated with blood or other bodily fluids
 - Sharps
 - Visibly soiled items that cannot be easily cleaned
 - Personal care items and toiletries
 - Unused, disposable items such as briefs, wipes
- Return all medications to the Registered Nurse/Registered Psychiatric Nurse.
- Pack all other small belongings neatly away in the white Personal Belongings bags.
- Place the Personal Belongings bag into a plastic storage bin. Alternately, pack belongings into a suitcase or duffel bag, particularly in homes where storage of plastic bins may be an issue.
- Special care is to be given when handling items such as Eagle Feathers, Traditional Medicines, or other valuables of cultural significance, and every effort made not to damage these items.
- Once the plastic bins are packed, clean and label the bins. Labels should include the full name of the resident, room and bed number and date of death. Labels should be attached to both the lid and the side of the bins. Alternatively label the suitcase or duffel bag if this is where items are packed.
- The Occupational Therapist or Physical Therapist will identify any rehabilitation equipment (i.e. wheelchairs, gait aids and other prescribed items such as hip protectors, splints, etc.) that belong to the resident. Clean and label these items. These items must be included in the personal belonging's inventory.
- Bins (or suitcase/duffel bag) and large items such as wheelchairs should be labeled with a number system e.g. 1 of 6; 2 of 6, 3 of 6, etc.
- Store items in a secure and safe place as designated by each LTC home.
- Ensure any items locked up (i.e. with the cashier, receptionist or alternate location), are available at the time the family is picking up the belongings. All monies are returned to the family or estate upon death of a resident via the PHC Finance department.

For residents without family, items are stored until direction is obtained from the Public Guardian & Trustee (PGT). The PGT has their own process for the itemization and release of belongings.

When returning belongings to family following a resident death, consider including a signed letter or condolence card with the belongings along with contact information should the family have any further questions or concerns regarding their loved one.

Additional Procedure related to COVID-19

For all sites experiencing a COVID-19 Outbreak:

- Belongings must be packed as outlined above and placed into a plastic storage bin. Belongings must not be packed in a suitcase or duffel bag.
- In addition to the items listed above to be discarded, all plush dolls and stuffed animals must be discarded for COVID-19 + residents.
- All belongings must be held in storage for a minimum of 7 days as directed by the Medical Health Officer before being released to the family.
- Each long-term care home will determine a safe and secure area to store the belongings until they are ready for pick up.

Documentation**Admission**

- Complete the Record of Admission form.
- For Cerner sites, complete the Valuables/Belonging section in the Electronic Health Record.
- For non-Cerner sites document valuables/belongings in the progress notes.

Transfer

The Social Worker or designate will complete the Transfer Form and include documentation in the health record regarding the resident's belongings.

Death

The Social worker or designate will document in the health record once the belongings are picked up following the death of a resident.

Related Documents**Related Policies**

- [Comfort Funds](#)
- [Safe Keeping of Patient Valuables](#)

Guidelines/Procedures/Forms

- Checklist for Packing COVID + Resident Belongings
- Checklist for Packing COVID – Resident Belongings
- Personal Belongings Form No. SE003 (available from Royal Printers/Printing Services)

- Record of Admission Form No. PHC-AD064
- Transfer Form

Contacts for this Decision Support Tool

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