

Professional Appearance & Attire Departmental Practice

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Alberta Health Services (AHS) relies on its representatives (employees, volunteers, physicians, students, contracted service providers, etc.) to convey a professional appearance appropriate to their position. This contributes to providing a safe and healthy environment for AHS representatives, patients, and their families, enhances and maintains AHS' professional image, and reflects the excellence of services we provide. AHS values diversity and wants patients, families and AHS representatives to feel comfortable expressing themselves while being engaged with AHS and the services it provides.

Additionally, as individual professionals, it is important to remember that the way we present ourselves has a direct and real impact on how others perceive us professionally. Our appearance and image can even add to or detract from our success in the workplace. We need to ensure our appearance reflects a professional image at work, to support public trust in AHS, its representatives and the services we provide.

APPLICABILITY

These guidelines outline the expectations to be followed by all staff within the Department of Medicine, Alberta Health Services – Calgary Zone.

DEPARTMENTAL PRACTICE

Identification:

- In accordance with the Access to Information (Physical, Electronic, Remote) policy, individuals issued with an AHS ID badge must ensure their badge is clearly visible at all times while in AHS facilities.

Professional Apparel / Dress:

- All staff are expected to wear clothing that is clean, in good repair, and professional in appearance. This includes weekend work and attendance at meetings and workshops (on / off site).
- Jewellery and accessories are permitted, if compliant with policies for Infection Prevention and Control (see Personal Hygiene section below).
- The following items of clothing are considered **unacceptable** for reasons of maintaining professional standards, as well as maintaining health and safety:
 - Stained, torn, ripped, or frayed clothing (including intentional rips or fraying)
 - Any clothing that reveals or exposes undergarments (underwear, bras, etc.) or midriffs, including but not limited to sheer / see-through clothing, low riding pants, tube / crop tops, low plunging necklines, or tops / dresses with straps that do not completely cover bra straps
 - Any skin-tight clothing, including but not limited to spandex, leotards, bodysuits, leggings, and tights
 - Clothing with any inappropriate or offensive logos, slogans, or lettering
 - Athletic wear, including but not limited to sweatshirts, sweat pants / shorts, yoga pants, sports jerseys, track suits, muscle shirts, or swim wear
 - Shorts, dresses, and skirts that do not reach to mid-thigh
 - Jeans / denim clothing

Exceptions:

- Skin-tight pants, including leggings and tights, are acceptable when worn with tops, dresses, skirts, or shorts that reach to at least mid-thigh
- Jeans / denim clothing may be worn on Casual Fridays, or in areas where the work dictates that jeans are appropriate (as defined by the supervisor and/or manager; e.g. moving days).
- For special events and occasions, the acceptable dress code may be adjusted by the supervisor and/or manager (e.g. visiting speakers/guests, Halloween, Stampede week, Christmas week, special sporting events, or volunteer events).

Personal Hygiene:

- All staff are expected to practice effective daily grooming and personal hygiene habits (e.g. bath, shower, use of anti-perspirant / deodorant)
- In accordance with the AHS IPC Hand Hygiene Program and Hand Hygiene Policy, staff providing direct client care must ensure the following:
 - Natural nails shall be clean and short. Artificial nails, nail enhancements, and chipped nail polish shall not be worn by those staff, medical staff, and Volunteers who provide direct patient care or perform other tasks that require hand hygiene.
 - Hand jewellery other than a simple ring, i.e. plain band, shall not be worn by staff, medical staff, and Volunteers who provide direct patient care or perform other tasks that require hand hygiene.
- In accordance with the AHS Environmental Odours and Scents Guideline, staff are asked to refrain from using or wearing scented products. Examples of scented products include: fragrances and perfumes; aftershave and colognes; strongly scented hair products, deodorants and soaps; lotions and creams; fabric softeners, candles, potpourri, oils, etc.

Safe Footwear:

- In general, all staff are expected to wear footwear that is appropriate to the work area; provides adequate support, grip and protection to prevent falls, and guards against the risk of personal injury caused by crushing, punctures, or abrasions.
- Footwear must be in good repair, clean and professional in appearance.
- “Flip flop” sandals, Crocs sandals, Birkenstock sandals, and other similar types of casual footwear are **unacceptable** as they are not professional in appearance, can fall off during an emergency situation, and do not provide adequate support and hazard protection.
- Footwear with open toes, open heel or surface openings are not recommended because they do not provide protection from spills or objects falling onto the feet or toes.
- Staff working in clinic areas must wear closed-toe shoes to protect against chemical spills, bodily fluids, puncture hazards and the transmission of infection.
- All staff are expected to continually monitor and assess their working conditions and to wear footwear that suits these conditions. For example, when walking on ice, snow or slippery flooring, staff must wear shoes or boots with proper grip to prevent falls. Similarly, staff walking on stairs or other uneven terrain should ensure that heel height does not present a tripping hazard.

If clothing and hygiene do not meet the above guidelines, as determined by the employee’s manager or supervisor, the employee will be asked to not wear the inappropriate item to work again. If noncompliance of this guideline persists, the employee may be sent home to change clothes and will receive coaching for the first offence. All other policies about personal time use will apply. Continued violations of this guideline may result in progressive disciplinary action.

REFERENCES:

1. AHS Quick Reference Guide to Managing General Workplace Issues, Appendix 3: Professional Appearance: <https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/main/assets/hr/tms-hr-mwi-appendix-3-professional-appearance-dress-code.pdf>
2. AHS Access to Information (Physical, Electronic, Remote) policy: <https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/policydocuments/1/clp-ahs-pol-access-information.pdf#search=access%20to%20information%20policy>
3. AHS IPC Hand Hygiene Program website: <https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/tools/hh/Page9900.aspx>
4. AHS Hand Hygiene Policy: <https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/policydocuments/1/clp-hand-hygiene-ps-02-policy.pdf#search=hand%20hygiene%20policy>
5. AHS Environmental Odours and Scents website: <https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/hr/Page18832.aspx>
6. AHS Environmental Odours and Scents Guideline: <https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/main/assets/hr/tms-hr-whs-environmental-odours-scents-guideline.pdf>
7. AHS Code of Conduct: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/about/policies/ahs-pub-code-of-conduct.pdf>
8. AHS Code of Conduct – FAQ: <http://albertahealthservices.ca/assets/about/policies/ahs-pub-code-of-conduct-faq.pdf>