



STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR



Jesse Brown VA Medical Center

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**JESSE BROWN VA MEDICAL CENTER
EMPLOYEE STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR
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JESSE BROWN VA MEDICAL CENTER

MISSION

To honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well being.

VISION

To be a patient-centered, integrated health care organization for veterans providing excellent health care, research and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner, and a secondary source of support for National emergencies.

JESSE BROWN VA MEDICAL CENTER EMPLOYEE STANDARDS

WELCOME!

On behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs as well as the entire staff at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, welcome to our Health Care System. It is with great pride and excitement that I extend to you my best wishes for success as you embark in your career with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our goals as an organization are to serve veterans by focusing on patient safety and quality of care; by working together with our interdisciplinary teams; and by enhancing the employee experience.

Each employee is an invaluable part of the organization. Regardless of your duties, location or experience, you are the hearts and hands of Jesse Brown VA Medical Center. You are an important part of our continued progress and advancement.

I hope that your experience here will be personally rewarding. I am grateful that you have chosen to join us in serving those who served our country: our veterans and their families.

Director

JESSE BROWN VA MEDICAL CENTER EMPLOYEE STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR

PURPOSE

At Jesse Brown VA Medical Center we are committed to providing high quality, personalized care to our veterans and their families.

Our focus is to “Put Veterans First.” We are committed to fulfilling our mission and our goals.

Jesse Brown VA Medical Center is relying on all of its employees, including you, to follow safety, privacy, and operating procedures, and to comply with facility, department, and supervisory instructions.

We believe that with our values coming from the heart, our daily behaviors will reflect our commitment to our medical center, our customers and the veterans we serve.

Standards of Behavior

Attitude

- We will treat everyone in a kind and professional manner.
- We will treat every patient, resident, family member and visitor as our guest.
- We will be courteous and friendly in speaking and in “body language”; rudeness (e.g., both verbal and non-verbal, including negative language, eye rolling, finger pointing, and other expressions of negativity) is never acceptable. Think about the tone of voice and words you might use, i.e. “Get Out!” or “Please leave!”
- We will promptly welcome veterans in a friendly manner whenever we encounter them, smiling warmly and introducing ourselves.
- We will meet veterans’ needs or gladly take them to someone who is able to do so.
- We will work collaboratively to help others.
- We will promote cooperation among co-workers/departments.
- We will be open-minded and flexible while adapting to changing conditions.
- We will make others, through our actions; feel appreciated, included, and valued.
- We will never use profane, obscene or threatening language towards patients, employees, supervisors or others. It is never acceptable to use derogatory ethnic labels or to use offensive references to ethnic background.
- **Make Eye Contact**
- We will offer co-worker support. If my workload is lighter, I will help my fellow-team members with heavier workloads.
- Always maintain a positive attitude.

Appearance

Personal Appearance & Dress Code

Employees are expected to maintain a professional image and appearance at all times. Department managers may determine any additional dress code rules specific to their work areas. Professional business attire is to be worn in departments which have no uniform requirements nor have an established departmental dress code policy. Employees are expected at all times to present a professional, businesslike image to our patients and our community. Unprofessionally attired and/or carelessly groomed employees may give the impression that they are also unprofessional in caring for the needs of patients. Therefore, exceptions to this policy will not be tolerated. Employees dressed inappropriately risk being sent home without pay. Repeated infractions will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Exceptions to this policy must obtain prior approval from the Medical Center Director.

Regulatory and statutory requirements may necessitate more restrictive guidelines in some work areas (e.g., protective covering requirements). Protective clothing must be worn where required.

Appropriate attire and appearance includes, but is not limited to:

- The JBVAMC authorized identification badge must be worn, above the waist and with the name visible to others, at all times while on duty at JBVAMC, or while off-site while on JBVAMC business. Only those working in a sterile environment are exempted from this requirement. No pins, buttons, stickers, badges, etc., that obscure your name may be affixed to the identification badge itself or the badge clip.
- Daily attention to hair, nails, oral & physical hygiene. Hair is to be worn in a conservative style and color.
- Employees with long hair who have direct patient contact must keep their hair arranged and secured neatly.
- Beards and mustaches must be neatly trimmed.
- Nails should be well manicured, conservative in color, and less than one inch in length.
- For purposes related to patient safety and care standard, employees who provide direct patient care are prohibited from wearing artificial nails or nail extenders.
- Clothing must be clean, properly fitting, and in good repair. Professional attire and modesty are expected in terms of length, style, fit, and transparency of clothing. Furthermore, clothing should be appropriate to the employee's duties, as well as safe for the work environment.

Standards of Behavior

Appearance

Personal Appearance & Dress Code Policy

Inappropriate attire includes, but is not limited to:

- **Tops:** tee-shirts/sweatshirts (unless deemed appropriate for the type of work being performed); tank tops; halters; backless tops; cropped shirts which expose the midriff; clothes with derogatory language; low cut blouses; skirts/dresses that are 2 inches above the top of the knee.
- **Pants:** sweatpants (unless deemed appropriate for the type of work being performed); stretch-pants/leggings; jeans/denim (unless deemed appropriate by the Service Chief for the type of work being performed); shorts; jumpsuits; jogging suits; bib overalls; frayed clothing; revealing or extremely tight fitting clothing.
- **Footwear:** flip-flops; or thong sandals.

Additional Appearance & Dress Code Expectations:

- **Footwear** must be clean, appropriate to the type of work being performed, and meet all safety requirements.
- **Surgical scrubs** provided by JBVAMC may be worn only by designated department personnel working in sterile environments; when worn outside of sterile areas, they must be covered by another garment.
- **Surgical scrubs** are not to be worn outside the hospital at any time.
- **Jewelry** should not interfere with the job or create a safety hazard: facial & oral jewelry is generally unacceptable.
- **Perfume/cologne** should be worn sparingly, and should not be worn by employees who have direct or occasional patient contact.
- **Excessive and inappropriate make-up** is not acceptable.
- **Employees in patient care areas** must make every effort to minimize exposure of tattoos.
- **Hats and caps** may not be worn in the building, unless for religious purposes or a part of a uniform.
- **Uniform for all Unit Clerks.**

Assessment of whether clothing meets dress code requirements rests with the manager.

Standards of Behavior

Communication

- Consistent communication is important to ensure not only efficient operations but also the safety of our patients, visitors and staff. Accordingly, as the principal common language of our patients and staff, English is to be spoken and written by employees during the performance of job duties when use of another language would adversely affect job performance, or the safety or efficiency of operations.
- For safety and efficiency reasons, communications among coworkers should be conducted in a language understandable to everyone directly involved in the conversation.
- Communication should be directed from first line supervisors to employees on a timely fashion.
- Make eye contact whenever possible.
- Bilingual employees communicating with coworkers who speak only English should conduct the conversation in English.
- English should be spoken in the presence of the patient unless indicated or approved by the patient.
- Satisfactory job performance requires that communications with English-speaking patients and visitors be conducted in English.
- Patients and their families typically feel vulnerable due to the circumstances that bring them to our facilities. Staff working with the patient should refrain from conversing in a language other than English unless indicated by the patient.
- To ensure effective communication and constructive discussion of assignments, work performance, and work rules, all employees should communicate in English with English speaking supervisors.
- Use of a language other than English is permitted during breaks, lunch and other non-work time; when an employee is requested to interpret for patients or family members who do not speak English; and when use of another language will not adversely affect job performance or the safety or efficiency of operations, consistent with the above guidelines.
- All employees are expected to ensure that JBVAMC's Communication and Language policy is administered appropriately.

Communication

- If employees feel that they have experienced or witnessed a violation of this policy, they are encouraged to notify their supervisor and/or service chief or whoever is designated acting in the capacity of the supervisor and/or service chief.
- Answer telephone, e-mails, and pagers.
- JBVAMC prohibits retaliation or threat of retaliation against employees who report what they perceive to be a policy violation, or for assisting in making a complaint. Any retaliation or threat of retaliation shall be treated as a separate incident, which shall be handled in the same manner and be subject to the same procedures as the complaint itself.
- Use of profane, obscene or threatening language towards patients, employees, managers or others is strictly prohibited. This includes derogatory ethnic name-calling or offensive references to ethnic background.
- JBVAMC will investigate all complaints about Communication and Language Policy violations promptly and thoroughly. If an investigation confirms that a JBVAMC employee has violated this policy, appropriate corrective action will be taken against that employee.

Call Lights

“How to Answer call lights”

- **When employees are unable to meet a patient’s needs directly, they must communicate those needs to the appropriate care provider, and then inform the patient what actions were taken and when the care provider will respond.**
- **After responding to the patient’s needs, employees are expected to offer further assistance prior to leaving the patient’s room.**
- **Employees are expected to respond to call lights within a timeframe of no more than three minutes. Please, be proactive.**
- **All employees (regardless of whether clinical or non-clinical) are expected to answer or acknowledge all call lights.**
- **Thank the patient for waiting, and apologize for the delay.**

Commitment to Co-Workers

At Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, the concept of “Putting Veterans First” also applies to interactions between co-workers. Satisfied customers are the result of satisfied employees. Therefore, when interacting with our co-workers, we will:

- Treat others with respect.
- Use the platinum rule: “Treat others how we want to be treated.”
- Recognize great work and thank others.
- Go beyond our job descriptions.
- Leave personal issues at home.
- Listen.
- Come on time to work and to meetings.
- Be open minded.
- Admit when we are wrong and take corrective action.
- Work with others to exceed our customers’ expectations.
- Include others in the decision-making process.
- Keep workplace clean.
- Dress appropriately and practice good hygiene.
- Behave professionally at all times.
- Praise in public, coach in private.
- Be non-judgmental: respect co-workers for their unique cultures, ages, and ethnicities.
- Avoid communicating in a language that others might not understand.
- Introduce yourself using your name, title, and department.
- Never use profane, obscene or threatening language towards patients, employees, supervisors or others. This includes derogatory ethnic name calling or offensive references to ethnic background.
- Refrain from gossiping and/or complaining.
- Welcome new employees and do everything possible to ease their transition.
- Wear identification badge.

Customer Waiting

Patients' conditions may deteriorate while waiting, and in some cases the effectiveness of the proposed treatment subsequently may be reduced. The experience of waiting can be extremely distressing, adversely affecting the patient's family life and/or employment. Excessive waiting times may be symptoms of inefficiencies in the healthcare system, needing to be addressed as part of good management. As an organization, we should strive to ensure that we adhere to the following steps:

- Recognize that the time of our veterans is valuable.
- Strive to provide customers with prompt service, always keeping the patient informed of delays and making them comfortable during their wait.
- Educate families about processes and provide a comfortable atmosphere for waiting customers. Inform patients at 20 minute intervals when and why there is a delay, and provide diversion activities.
- Update family members no less than every 30 minutes while patients are undergoing procedures.
- If a scheduled procedure or exam is delayed, provide the patient with the option of coming in later or rescheduling to a new appointment.
- Offer refreshments and an apology if a wait occurs.
- Return wheelchairs and other equipment to the proper department, unit, or area.

Elevator Etiquette

- Always remember patient privacy and confidentiality in the elevators and while waiting.
- While waiting for the elevator, stand away from the doors to allow others to exit prior to your boarding.
- Staff should not discuss patient information with each other in the elevator.
- Allow patients and/or visitors to exit and enter the elevator first. Patients and visitors should always be given priority. If the elevator is full, employees should wait for the next elevator.
- Be courteous, hold elevator door for patients entering and exiting elevators.
- Consider the stairs if you are going 1 floor up or 1 floor down unless you are carrying a heavy package or disabled or injured.
- Hold the door if someone is coming on the elevator and wants to get on.
- When transporting patients in wheelchairs always back them in so they face the door. Exit with caution.
- Do not hold the door for a friend/co-worker who has taken a quick side trip. Never hold the door more than a few seconds.
- Give people their space. If the elevator is crowded, give as much space as you can without crowding others or yourself.
- If possible, do not use your cell phone on the elevator.
- If you are standing near the buttons, push a button for someone who asks.
- Break the ice politely if you wish. It never hurts to say “Good Morning or Hello” to our customers.
- Stay farthest from the door if possible if you will be the last person to step out. Exit quickly when you reach your floor.

Privacy

Compliance and Business Confidentiality

- **The Privacy Officer for Jesse Brown VA Medical Center maintains overall control of release of medical information in the Release of Information Unit, and has responsibility for compliance with the laws and regulations.**
- **The Information Officer oversees compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Employees may not engage in unauthorized disclosure of confidential business information, commercially sensitive information or financial information about Jesse Brown VA Medical Center.**
- **The medical center releases patient medical information in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 and the Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act of 1996. Confidentiality.**
- **All patient and employee financial data and medical records are confidential. Unauthorized access, modification, destruction or disclosure of any confidential information or data to employees, other individuals, or entities not authorized to receive that information is grounds for immediate termination.**
- **Information contained in medical records is confidential and privileged. Release of any patient information will only be granted according to Federal Regulations. These regulations have provided for the release of information upon receipt of proper consent of the patient or his/her legal representative, except in certain restrictive situations. All disclosures of patient medical information must be coordinated through the Release of Information Unit of Patient Administration Service.**

Privacy

- Medical information regarding treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, sickle cell anemia, and HIV will be released only as provided in Federal Law 38. The law is extremely restrictive and provides for release of information without special consent only in cases of medical emergency.
- The medical center will release information to law enforcement officials and health departments in accordance with Federal Law 38.
- This law provides that names, addresses and information from the medical record may be furnished to law enforcement officials and health departments upon receipt of a written request. The request must specify the type of information sought and the purpose.
- Do not give your private pin# or password to anyone.
- All appropriate shredders to be provided by the organization and placed in closed proximity to your working station.
- Closure of doors when possible, especially when discussing sensitive information. Usage of privacy screen and locking computers.

Please refer to the following Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Memorandums and VHA Directives for additional information related to privacy:

- Jesse Brown VAMC Memorandum 136-06-10, Release of Medical Information.
- VHA Handbook 1605.1, Privacy and Release of Information, March 17, 2006.
- VHA Directive 1605.03, VHA Privacy Compliance Assurance Program & Privacy Compliance Information, March 17, 2006.

Safety Awareness

The purpose of these safety standards is to provide a safe environment for all patients, visitors, and employees at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center. It is the responsibility of all Jesse Brown VA Medical Center employees to take ownership for the safety of patients, visitors, other employees, and themselves. This responsibility can be met by practicing the following standards.

- Comply with all safety rules and regulations of the hospital, including completion of all mandatory safety training on an annual basis.
- Provide a safe environment to all patients, visitors, and employees. Practice all safety rules regulated to the hospital including completion of all mandatory training on an annual basis.
- Comply with all service level safety rules and regulations.
- Comply with all safety rules pursuant to use of the parking garage, including following all posted speed limits. Park in employees' designated areas only.
- Jesse Brown VA Medical Center employees are to be alcohol and drug free at all times while on premises, with the exception of prescribed medication for an acute or chronic condition.
- Keep your work area clean, safe, and free of clutter. If you see litter in common areas, dispose of properly.
- If you observe a safety hazard, regardless of where, correct it immediately if it is safe to do so, and report your action to the area supervisor. If it is not immediately correctable, report the situation to the area supervisor immediately.
- Report any incident of violence to the Supervisor and VA Police as needed.
- Report any incident of possession of weapons by any person on VA property to the VA Police immediately.
- Use caution when walking in the hallways. Proceed at a safe speed at corners, and give those with ambulatory issues ample room and time to maneuver. This is particularly important when transporting patients or using equipment such as a flatbed.
- Keep to the right of the corridor when transporting patients, when possible.

Safety Awareness

- Always practice good hygiene, including regular hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes with tissue or forearm.
- Keep all doorways and hallways clear of obstructions in order to provide a safe emergency exit route. If you see an obstructed area, correct the issue or report it to the area supervisor and your own supervisor immediately.
- Bring any safety concerns you have to the attention of your supervisor and/or the facility safety officer. Open communication concerning safety is an expectation of all Jesse Brown VA employees.
- Employees need to be trained on all safety precautions.

Please make reference to the following policies:

- Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Memorandum No. 138-18-11 (Section 3, Part K, No. 1)
- VHA National Patient Safety Improvement Handbook, May 23, 2008
- VHA Directive 7701 and 7701.1 Occupational Safety & Health, March 13, 2003.

Sense of Ownership

Sense of ownership begins with allowing employees to make an emotional investment in the future of the Medical Center. It begins with a positive and inclusive attitude from upper management. JBVA Administration treats employees like owners by attaching value to them and their input. Following is a list of behavioral standards that have been developed to reflect Jesse Brown VA Medical Center commitment to service excellence. These standards provide useful guidelines for employees to practice daily.

- **“We need Owners not Renters,” treat the veteran as they want to be treated.**
- **Use your computer for work issues, not for game playing or internet surfing/shopping.**
- **When you see litter, pick it up and dispose of it properly.**
- **Keep your workspace and surrounding area free of litter and debris. Clean up any spills promptly.**
- **Look beyond our assigned tasks. When it is appropriate for you to perform a service, do it.**
- **Emphasize “How can we solve the problem” vs. “It’s not my job”. If you are unable to meet a request, find someone who can.**
- **Strive to achieve an excellent attendance record in order to provide consistency in quality of service.**
- **Be fiscally responsible by not wasting time or resources.**
- **Work to find solutions, rather than making excuses or blaming others for poor performance.**
- **Communicate any concerns, suggestions and ideas to your supervisor in an open and honest manner.**
- **Complete all mandatory training and maintain appropriate credentials/licensure.**
- **Complete assigned actions and assignments within timeframes. Take accountability.**
- **Acknowledge and respond to e-mail, voice mail and other forms of communication in a professional and timely manner.**
- **Be punctual for meetings and appointments.**
- **Do not damage, deface, or misuse materials or property of the hospital, staff or visitors.**

Workplace Violence and Sexual Harassment

Here at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center neither, violence, disruptive behavior: physical or verbal in nature towards anyone; veteran, employee, visitor, internal or external customer will **NOT** be tolerated.

- Violence of any kind may be subject to the most severe disciplinary action or termination of employment and criminal prosecution.
- Employees should report any acts of violence to their immediate supervisor.
- Supervisors are to speak with their staff regarding violence in the workplace whenever an incident occurs and as needed should engage human resources for appropriate disciplinary action.

The medical center has zero tolerance for Sexual Harassment in the workplace.

- Any person or employee that feels they have been sexually harassed should report the occurrence to their immediate supervisor, patient advocate or Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) counselor.
- Supervisors and patient advocate should consult the EEO counselor regarding the matter to ensure that appropriate action is taken to review the individual's concerns.

All Jesse Brown VA Medical Center employees will be in serviced. Employees are to promote a positive and safe environment so that we are the provider of choice for our veterans and the employer of choice for staff.

Performance Standards

A set of Behavior and Performance standards has been developed by the Standards of Behavior Committee at Jesse Brown VA Medical Center to establish specific behaviors that all employees and volunteer are expected to practice while on duty.

By incorporating our core values and these standards as a measure of overall work performance, Jesse Brown VAMC makes it clear that employees and volunteers are expected to adhere to and practice the standards of performance outlined in the Standards of Behavior Handbook.

I have read and understand the Standards of Behavior Handbook and I agree to comply with and practice the standards.

SIGNATURE

DATE

PRINT NAME AND DEPARTMENT