

Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre

Type of Policy:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Administration (A) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Client Services General (CG) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Board of Directors (B) | <input type="checkbox"/> Client Services Programs (CP) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial (F) | <input type="checkbox"/> Primary Care (PC) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources (H) | <input type="checkbox"/> Acquired Brain Injury Program (ABI) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information Systems (I) | <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes Education Program (DEP) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> KDCHC Governing Principles (K) | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteers (V) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Occupational Health & Safety (S) | |

Policy No: CG1802

Title: Smudging

Background

Smudging is a traditional First Nations and Métis ceremony held when the officiate believes it is appropriate to cleanse an area and/or the participants involved in an activity. The officiate of the ceremony circulates a bowl or shell normally with sage, sweet-grass, tobacco, or cedar. These medicines are burned in small quantities and participants voluntarily use the smoke from the medicines to cleanse themselves. KDCHC respects the right of First Nations and Métis people to smudge and has developed these guidelines to provide direction for the practice of smudging. Smudging may be done for a group or done by an individual as part of an appointment where the person or persons deem this to be required by them to support their health and wellness.

Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre (KDCHC) honours and respects the meaningful First Nations and Métis tradition of smudging. This document clarifies KDCHC commitment to and application of s.13 of the *Smoke Free Ontario Act* in respect to the use of smoke in traditional First Nations and Métis cultural or spiritual ceremonies. Section 13 of the *Smoke Free Ontario Act* exempts from restrictions otherwise placed on the use of tobacco, the smoking of tobacco or holding lighted tobacco by First Nations and Métis persons for traditional First Nations and Métis cultural or spiritual purposes. For more information, please see the following fact sheet at <http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/factsheets/aboriginal.asp>.

KDCHC also recognizes that its community is made up of a wide and diverse population. In facilitating smudging ceremonies, KDCHC wants to balance the rights of all. Accordingly, KDCHC has created this policy to ensure that these traditional smudging practices are honoured and supported, and that KDCHC's obligations with respect to Occupational Health & Safety are met.

KDCHC conducted tests of smudging ceremony with the City of Kitchener Fire Inspector as part of developing this policy. As a result of the test, it was determined that smudging would not affect the heat detectors or the fire panel alerts within the KDCHC premises.

Policy

1. KDCHC staff will support and facilitate the practice of smudging for clients who request this ceremony, whether as part of a group or an individual appointment. Indigenous clients cannot be denied the right to practice this ceremony.
2. This policy will be posted on the KDCHC website.

Procedures

Requests

3. Advanced notice of the request for smudging in a group setting or program should be provided whenever possible. This will allow KDCHC to inform other building occupants that may be affected by the smoke.
4. Although not required, clients who wish to smudge as part of an individual service appointment are asked to discuss this with their provider in advance, so that appropriate notification to those potentially affected can be made. However, should a client who has the equipment for smudging decide at the time of their appointment that they wish to smudge, the provider will respectfully facilitate the client's request as effectively as possible.

Smudging Locations

5. Smudging can be done in any part of the building, including all meetings rooms.
6. It is recommended that smudging in exam rooms and individual offices be done in rooms where there is an exterior window, so that the window can be opened to reduce the amount of smoke filtering through the rest of the building.
7. If smudging is done in the Community Room, it is recommended that the venting hood from the Community Kitchen be turned on in order to control the movement of smoke through the building. The vent hood can be turned on and hallway doors to the kitchen be opened if smudging is done in another meeting room. This will support the clearing of the smoke on the main floor.
8. It is not recommended that smudging be done in meeting room 7 as this room is not optimally ventilated for the purposes of smudging.

Smudging Ceremony Fire Precautions

9. The most commonly used vessels for smudging ceremonies are a small cast-iron frying pan or pot, or an abalone shell, all of which are fire proof vessels. KDCHC requires that any burning material is never left unattended and that the person leading the smudge douse the burning material immediately after the conclusion of the smudging ceremony. KDCHC requires that the participants do not let the smudge smolder during the entire event.

Communication to Building Occupants

10. Where prior notice of a smudge has been given, in order to educate, inform and give notice to other building occupants in the area, the staff member organizing the event will affix a notice, in common areas of KDCHC at least 24 hours in advance of the smudge.
11. At a suitable time shortly prior to the commencement of the ceremony, the staff member will inform anyone who may be exposed to the smoke or the scent of the medicines so that those that are sensitive or allergic may make arrangements to find an alternate place to work .
12. If smudging is done on a more ad hoc basis, staff will inform staff around the area as much as is possible. At a minimum, a sign is to be placed on the door indicating that a smudge is in progress. The sign should remain on the door for the remainder of the meeting or appointment so that all staff know the origin of the smoke/smell.
13. Clients or program participants may be asked to smudge outdoors in situations where severe effect of smoke or scents on building occupants cannot be sufficiently mitigated.

Occupational Health & Safety

KDCHC employees who have reason for concern about the effects of this policy with respect to their personal health should contact their supervisor to develop an individualized plan for mitigation.

Approved By: Eric Goldberg, Executive Director

Date:
