

## Student Training and Rights of Patients

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**Functional Sub group** Clinical/ Patient Services - Governance and Service Delivery  
Personnel/Workforce - Learning and Development

**Summary** Principles to ensure that an appropriate code of conduct is maintained at all times by medical, nursing and health service students during their contact with patients.

**Author Branch** Health Education and Training Institute

**Branch contact** HETI

**Applies to** Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Declared, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, NSW Ambulance Service, Ministry of Health, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres, Private Nursing Homes, Public Hospitals

**Distributed to** Public Health System, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, Health Professional Associations and Related Organisations, NSW Ambulance Service, Ministry of Health, Public Hospitals, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres, Private Nursing Homes, Tertiary Education Institutes

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**Policy Manual** Not applicable

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**Status** Active

### Director-General

This Policy Directive may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is **mandatory** for NSW Health and is a condition of subsidy for public health organisations.

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## CIRCULAR

File No	A28345
Circular No	97/46
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Contact	Liz Gill (02) 9391 9210

### STUDENT TRAINING AND RIGHTS OF PATIENTS

There are a number of methods used by various institutions in communicating the appropriate behaviour expected of students in the clinical setting. Some of these are student guidelines, accompanying clinical instructors, identification badges and patient brochures explaining the role of students. All New South Wales public health system services must have a Student Training and Patient Rights policy.

This Circular highlights the principles that should be encompassed in local policies to ensure that an appropriate code of conduct is maintained at all times by medical, nursing and health science students during their contact with patients. Student supervisors must also be made aware of these principles and local policies concerning expected codes of conduct.

#### Principles to be encompassed in local policies.

1. Patients have the right to expect a safe and adequate level of care delivered by competent staff.
2. Adequate supervision of students must be provided to ensure an adequate standard of patient care.
3. All patients using a health system facility should be made aware that public hospitals have a community role in teaching and training.
4. The provision of information/advice to a patient on a proposed treatment/procedure and the subsequent obtaining of consent to a treatment/procedure must not be undertaken by a student. Students should understand the patient and information and consent process but may only participate in the process as an observer.
5. Any patient may refuse to have a student participate in their treatment regardless of whether the activity is part of or additional to the normal requirements of care. Patients should be clearly informed where it is desired to have students participate in their treatment.

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Distributed in accordance with circular list(s):

A 43	B	C 40	D	E
F 16	G 5	H 12	I 9	J 37
K	L 9	M 6	N	P 4 Q

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6. Patient consent is required where it is proposed a student be involved in treatment/procedure as opposed to general care. Patients are under no obligation to participate in such teaching activities. For non-invasive procedures verbal consent should be adequate subject to any local policy on consent. For invasive procedures, written evidence of consent would be required, preceded by adequate explanation of the nature of the procedure, its risks or benefits and the level of competence of the provider. This consent should include stating the identity and status of the student.
7. Patients must be treated with respect and should not be placed in situations which may cause them to feel embarrassed, harassed or offended. This means ensuring adequate privacy and appropriate supervision (or chaperoning) for interview and examinations.
8. Students and supervisors have an obligation to ensure that the student's level of competence is such that when a student-patient interaction occurs, the patient's safety, well-being and dignity are not compromised. This would require students to express concerns about the limits of their competence and the supervisor to provide adequate support.
9. Part of the learning experience for the student should be the opportunity for the patient to comment on the student's interaction.

The following circulars relate to student access to health facilities and should be read in conjunction with this circular:

Circular number 92/21 "Consent to Medical Treatment"

Circular number 92/59 "Agreement for Access by TAFE Students to Health Establishments"

Michael Reid  
**Director-General**