

## Use of Chaperones

The UT Student Health Center (SHC) is committed to providing a comfortable environment where patients and staff feel safe and respected. Therefore, whenever requested by either a patient or clinical staff member, a SHC appointed chaperone shall be made available for any or all parts of a medical appointment (referred to below as Medical Appointments).

To serve as a safeguard for patients against any unacceptable acts or behavior and to minimize the risk of a clinical staff member's actions being misinterpreted, SHC **requires** the presence of a chaperone under the following circumstances:

During any general examination/procedure wherein the patient is completely or partially disrobed, irrespective of the body region being examined/treated (referred to below as Exams Involving Disrobing). Disrobing is the removal of clothing that may expose the genitalia, breasts, and the perianal region, rectum, and/or buttocks.

During all sensitive examinations/procedures (referred to below as Sensitive Exams). Sensitive Exams include examinations/procedures involving the genitalia, breasts, and the perianal region, rectum, and/or buttocks.

### What is the role of the chaperone?

Chaperones are intended to create a safe environment for both patients and providers.

The chaperone's primary role is to provide reassurance and comfort to the patient, observe the exam or procedure, and assist the provider. The chaperone will stand in an unobtrusive location and provide assistance to the provider and support to the patient as needed.

A chaperone acts as a witness during medical exams and procedures. Chaperones protect both patients and providers by helping create a neutral, safe, respectful environment. Any chaperone witnessing an inappropriate or unacceptable behavior on the part of a healthcare provider is required to report it immediately.

### Who can serve as a chaperone?

Only SHC healthcare professionals shall serve as chaperones, as healthcare professionals are held to a confidentiality standard and can affirm the formal, professional nature of an examination, treatment, or procedure. The use of a family member or friend as a chaperone is not permitted. However, a parent will be permitted to be present during an examination of a patient who is a minor. In addition, a parent, other family member, or friend will be permitted to be present during an exam of a patient who is not a minor with the consent of the patient and the permission of the healthcare provider, which shall be based on the healthcare professional's opinion of what is in the best interest of the patient.

### Can a patient decline to have a chaperone present during an exam or procedure?

A patient may refuse the presence of a chaperone during an appointment. However, no SHC healthcare professional shall participate in an appointment without a chaperone when they feel one is necessary or when a chaperone is otherwise required by this policy. The only exception is if the healthcare professional believes that there is a serious risk to the health or safety of the patient if the exam or procedure is delayed, in which case the healthcare professional should perform the procedure without a chaperone.

If a patient initially refuses the presence of a chaperone, SHC staff should explain to the patient the role of a chaperone. If the patient still refuses, the patient shall then be provided a referral to an external clinical resource for their further evaluation and care, unless the patient's health or safety will be at risk if the procedure is delayed.