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Code Yellow- Lost or Missing Resident

Policy:

This policy outlines the procedures to follow when a resident is suspected to be missing. "Code Yellow" refers to a situation in which a resident is absent from their assigned area without staff knowledge or without a planned absence.

Norfolk Hospital Nursing Home will take every reasonable precaution to safeguard the residents under its care; this includes residents wearing identification bracelets and having resident photographs on file. The Code Yellow Missing Resident Search Procedure will be automatically implemented:

Purpose:

To identify Residents at risk and to provide a systematic search for lost/missing Residents in compliance with the Ontario Long-Term Care Act, 2007, and the Ministry of Long-Term Care guidelines.

Scope:

This policy applies to all staff, students, volunteers, and contractors at Norfolk Nursing Home who are responsible for resident care and safety.

Definitions:

- **Missing Resident:** A resident is considered "missing" when they are unaccounted for or not in their assigned room, and their whereabouts are unknown.
- **Code Yellow Activation:** The activation of Code Yellow occurs when a resident is determined to be missing after staff has conducted a thorough search of their immediate area and

surrounding spaces.

- **Resident:** A person receiving long-term care at Norfolk Nursing Home, either on a permanent or temporary basis.

Procedure to ensure all Residents are present:

The Charge Nurse or designate will:

- Ensure each Resident is accounted for at each meal and according to resident need;
- Ensure all Residents sign in/out at the book located at the Nursing Station or be signed out by the person escorting them from the home.

Procedure when a Resident is identified as lost/missing:

- As soon as a resident is identified as missing the Charge Nurse will be notified. The Charge Nurse will check the LOA book to see if the resident has left the home with family or others;
- All team members will initiate a search of the immediate area where the resident was last seen;
- The Director of Care or designate will be notified;
- If the resident is not quickly located, the Charge Nurse or delegate will page "Code Yellow", (name of missing resident, home area and room number). This will be repeated three times via overhead page;
- A team member will be assigned to deliver the chart with a resident photograph and description of what the resident was last wearing to the Command Center. which will be set up in the NHH meeting room.
- The Emergency Response Administrator or designate will direct those copies of the photograph be made to be given to emergency services personnel;
- All Nursing Staff on each resident home area will conduct a search of the home areas in accordance with the following:

Identification of Missing Resident:

- A resident is considered "missing" if they are unaccounted for after a routine check or if they have left their assigned area without notifying staff.
- Staff should be aware of residents' mobility, cognitive, and behavioral challenges, as these may increase the risk of a resident becoming lost or wandering.

The Emergency Response Administrator will:

- Establish a search command centre at the administration office;
- The Director of Care and President/CEO to be contacted.

- Contact the family/representative of the missing resident;
- Have overall responsibility for the implementation of search procedures;
- If the resident is missing during the evening/night hours or in inclement weather, the Fan out System may be initiated to increase effectiveness of the search;
- Designate team members to search assigned areas and report back to the Command Centre within 10 minutes.
- If a full floor by floor search cannot be conducted simultaneously, begin a search in the vicinity of the point the resident was last seen. Assign the search team members to various locations and instruct all team members to report back within 10 minutes.
- Post a team member at each unlocked exit to ensure the resident does not exit while conducting the search.

Search Procedures- Searching Resident Areas:

- Allocated team members should begin searching at each end of the home area and search toward the middle of the hallway then continue onto the opposite end ensuring that each room has been searched twice. Stairwells will then be searched with the staff members entering the respective stairwells at the same time ensuring that the resident will not be missed.
 - In each room look:
 - On/under/beside beds;
 - In each bathroom;
 - Behind privacy curtains;
 - Closets;
 - Behind doors;
 - Shower stalls;
 - Bathtubs;
 - Scan room for any area that may hide a resident from view.
 - ALL areas are to be searched including areas that are usually kept locked.
 - These include: Utility rooms, Linen closets, Stairwells, Elevators, Lift Rooms, Electrical Rooms.

All searchers should:

- Work in pairs through the hallway to prevent the lost person moving into an already checked area;
- Search an assigned area noting the time that they searched the area on their floor plan;
- Remain silent except for essential conversation and listen for a person;
- Listen for lost person who may be crying, singing, or quietly talking;
- Be cognizant that the person may not respond to his/her name;

The Emergency Response Administrator should assign additional available team members to search the

outdoor perimeter of the home, common areas, staff rooms, public washrooms, kitchens, laundry and other non-resident areas.

Searching Non-Resident Areas

- **Step 1: Search:** Once a resident is identified as missing, the immediate area where the resident is last known to have been should be searched by the staff. This includes:
 - Resident's room
 - Common areas (e.g., lounges, dining rooms, activity room)
 - Bathrooms and nearby hallways
 - Outdoor areas (e.g., gardens, parking lots)
- **Step 2: Notify Supervisor:** The charge nurse or supervisor should be notified immediately upon suspicion that a resident is missing.
- **Step 3: Activate Code Yellow:** If the resident is not located after a quick search, the supervisor will activate **Code Yellow**. This will involve:
 - Announcing the Code Yellow alert via the facility's internal communication system.
 - Assigning roles and tasks to staff for a coordinated search.
 - Notifying security personnel (if applicable) and local authorities if necessary.
- **Step 4: Conduct a Coordinated Search:** A more detailed search will be conducted, including:
 - Staff will check all areas of the home.
 - Ensure that all doors and gates are secured to prevent further escape.
 - Involve all available staff members, including nursing staff, support staff, and security, to help in the search.

External Notification (if applicable):

IF THE RESIDENT IS NOT FOUND within 15 minutes of being noted as missing:

- **The Emergency Response Administrator will:**
 - Notify local law enforcement (police) and provide all relevant information about the resident (e.g., name, description, clothing worn, medical history).
 - Contact, Director of Care or designate if not already present;
 - Notify the resident's designated family or substitute decision-maker (SDM).

The Director of Care or designate will immediately contact:

- The NGH President/CEO
- Notify the Ministry of Long-Term Care within the time frame specified in the Ontario Long-Term Care Act (usually within 24 hours).

- Stay in contact with the family/representative notifying them that:
 - Resident is missing and we are continuing to follow our missing resident protocol to ensure this resident is found;
 - Time of emergency;
 - Current Status;
 - Mechanism of access to updated information. Involvement of Media.
 - If the resident is not found in a timely manner (3 to 6 hours depending on risks)
 - consideration should be given to involving the media and/or the general public in the search procedures.
 - Police Search Team will when deem necessary release information to the media to request public assistance;
 - Advise resident family/representative of release name and information;
 - The Police have the primary responsibility for communication with the media during the search
 - All corporate media contact is referred to the Director of Communications

WHEN THE RESIDENT IS FOUND

- If the resident is found page “Code Yellow” ALL CLEAR – three times
- The Emergency Response Administrator will notify the President/CEO, Director of Care, family/ representative and attending physician/NP, medical director.
- The Director of Care or Charge Nurse will notify the:
 - Police (ASAP) by 911 or on scene officer;

Documentation:

- All actions taken during the search for the missing resident must be documented in the resident's medical record and the facility's incident log.
- The documentation should include:
 - Time the resident was first noticed missing.
 - Details of the search efforts.
 - Communication with external authorities (if applicable).
 - Notification to the resident's family or substitute decision-maker (SDM).

Reporting

- Ensure a Critical Incident/Mandatory Report is completed and submitted, if required, to the Ministry of Long-Term Care.

Debriefing:

- Once the resident has been found or otherwise located, a debriefing meeting will be held with staff to review the incident and identify any areas for improvement in the response procedure.
- A full investigation will be conducted to assess any potential failures in the system (e.g., insufficient supervision, inadequate security measures) and to prevent future occurrences.
- A report is filed with the Ministry of Long-Term Care as required under the Ontario Long-Term Care Act.

Roles & Responsibilities:

- **Staff:**
 - Be vigilant about resident whereabouts, especially high-risk residents (e.g., those with dementia or mobility impairments).
 - Assist in the search and reporting of any missing resident immediately.
- **Supervisor/Charge Nurse:**
 - Immediately notify the appropriate authorities, activate Code Yellow, and coordinate the search efforts.
- **Director of Care or Designate:**
 - Ensure that all staff are trained in Code Yellow procedures.
 - Provide oversight for the post-incident review and ensure compliance with all reporting requirements.

Training and Education:

- All staff will receive annual training on Code Yellow procedures, including how to recognize a missing resident, activate a Code Yellow, and assist in the search efforts.
- Specific training will be provided for high-risk residents, including those with cognitive impairments, wandering tendencies, and mobility limitations.

References and Related Policies:

NGH Code Yellow- Missing Person

Ontario Long-Term Care Act

NGH/NHNNH Emergency Preparedness Plan

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Chief Human Resource Officer Approval	Sarah-Jane Irvine: Chief Human Resources Officer	02/2025
H&S Specialist Approval	Belinda Marowah: Health & Safety Specialist	02/2025

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