VA EASTERN COLORADO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
VERTARANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

NOV 0 8 2012

00-06 (05)

EMPLOYEE ATTIRE GUIDELINES

1. PURPOSE: To establish policy, procedures, and responsibilities for employees attire, personal hygiene, and grooming in the professional environment of VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System (VA ECHCS). This policy also applies to all employees of any activity / facility serviced by ECHCS Human Resources Management Service.

2. POLICY:

a. Employees who are not required to wear uniforms are expected to wear clothes suitable for business and to present themselves in a manner which brings credibility and professional image to patients, visitors and staff. Employees who are provided a uniform allowance are required to follow the policy for clinical wear.

b. Specific requirements regarding appropriate attire and grooming may be more defined in negotiated agreements between the service and the appropriate union, e.g. AFGE and/or the NNU. It is expected that employees in these services will comply fully with any such agreements.

c. If an employee's dress, appearance or hygiene endangers the health or safety of others, distracts other employees from their work, causes customer complaints or otherwise adversely affects quality or efficiency of service, the supervisor may require the employee to make whatever change is necessary immediately. The employee is to be sent home to change and to return to work in a reasonable period of time (determined by where the employee lives) and will be charged annual leave (AL) for this absence.

3. RESPONSIBILITY:

a. Service Chiefs and Supervisors are responsible for implementing and enforcing the provisions of this policy within their respective sections and counsel individuals as required. New staff will be furnished a copy of this policy during orientation. All staff will be required to review this policy on an annual basis as part of annual mandatory training. The Health System Director or Service Chiefs may allow a short-term deviation from this policy for special circumstances or events.

b. Human Resources will be responsible for the overall administration of this policy. This responsibility includes overseeing policy and furnishing information and assistance to managers, supervisors and employees upon request. Human Resources will be responsible for providing a copy of this policy to all newly hired employees.

c. ECHCS employees are responsible for adhering to this policy.

4. PROCEDURES:

a. Identification Badges-Employee identification (ID) badges must be worn in clear view, above the waist, with employees name and picture visible to the patients and staff at all times, except when on computer at employee work station. ID badges may be attached to a break-away lanyard, or clipped to clothing and are subject to the local safety practices. This does not apply to sterile environments.

b. Casual clothing or an unkempt appearance is inconsistent with the professional image and reputation of ECHCS. Generally, acceptable professional attire includes skirts, pants and clothing that cover the back, shoulder, and midriff. Proper attire and appearance includes:

(1) Females: Clinical Wear or Business Casual attire as designated by the department position. Generally, appropriately fitting dresses, suits, skirts or slacks with blouses, collared shirts or sweaters are appropriate. Hemlines and slits should not be revealing and of conservative length appropriate for a healthcare environment. Appropriate undergarments must be worn.

(2) Males: Clinical Wear, Formal Business or Casual Business attire as designated by the department position. Generally, a collared shirt with or without a tie, polo shirt, or docker-type slacks, sweaters and vests are acceptable. Appropriate undergarments must be worn.

(3) Lab Coats: Employees who care for patients in non-routine or emergent situations should wear lab coats or other protective attire when in the patient environment.

(4) Hosiery: Socks or hosiery should be appropriate to the overall environment, manner of dress, and/or duties performed.

(5) Footwear: Footwear must be of professional style and color with a heel height appropriate to the type of work performed. Shoes must be clean, well-polished and in good repair. Athletic shoes may be worn if the shoes are in good repair, clean and neat, not ripped, torn or stained, and are not lighted or have wheels. For safety reasons, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards, 29CFR 1910.132 and 1910.136, requires the use of protective footwear when employees are working in areas where there is a danger of foot injuries due to falling or rolling objects, or objects piercing the sole, and where there is a possibility of the employee's feet being exposed to an electrical hazard. Therefore, adequate foot protection that encloses the foot and heels, two inches or less, are generally required in all work areas. Employees who work in administrative, non-patient care areas may wear open-toed shoes (but not flip flops). Additional protective footwear (e.g. safety shoes or boots) may be required in certain work environments (e.g. warehouse) and/or emergency situations. See Attachment A for samples of acceptable and unacceptable footwear.

(6) Holiday attire: for any holiday, especially Halloween, must meet all of the criteria in this policy and must reflect mindfulness of the many needs and concerns of our veteran patients. Garish, frightening or other provocative images are not appropriate.

(7) Jewelry: Employees working in patient care areas or around machinery should not wear hanging jewelry, hair ornaments, pins, or chains that may constitute a personal safety

hazard. Jewelry is defined as, but not limited to rings, watches, necklaces, earrings, anklets, bracelets, and hair ties. Jewelry and accessories should be small, unobtrusive, and limited to that which provides a simple, conservative, and professional appearance.

(8) Tattoos Body Piercing Jewelry: Jewelry, body piercing and tattoos should not be offensive or excessive in size or quantity. Body piercing hardware that is offensive or excessive in size or quantity should not be visible or should be removed during the employee's tour of duty. Supervisors will determine what is offensive or excessive.

(9) Hair: Hair longer than shoulder length is to be tied back or contained in a hairnet if working in patient care areas or other areas where hairnets are required by department dress guidelines or other regulations.

(10) Facial Hair: Facial hair (mustaches, beards, sideburns) are acceptable provided it is clean and neatly trimmed so that no hair underlies the seal of a respirator.

(11) Make-up: Make up should be appropriate for a business environment.

(12) Nails: Fingernails are to be clean and groomed. Polish is acceptable provided it is not chipped. In patient care or food preparation areas, no acrylic nails or gels, no nail charms or decals on fingernails; nail length should not exceed ¼ of an inch beyond the fingertip. Refer to ECHCS Policy 111-12, Hand Hygiene. For employees in non-patient care areas, acrylic or gel nails are permissible; nail charms are not appropriate.

(13) Perfume or Cologne: Excessive use of fragrance or after shave lotion may cause severe allergic reactions for some person and should be avoided. Fragrances will be used conservatively, especially in patient care areas where ill patients may be affected.

c. Unacceptable Attire/Appearance includes:

(1) Clothing that is faded, stained, discolored, torn, patched, ripped, frayed or missing buttons.

(2) Attire that is tight, short or misfitting. Revealing clothes (such as crop tops, tank tops, halter/tube tops, backless, spaghetti straps or muscle shirts); see-through clothing; blue denim jeans/skirts, bib overalls, leggings, stirrups or spandex; shorts, gym, athletic, or sweatshirts/sweatpants; tee-shirts with graphics or language; patient gowns and the like

(a) Pants/Skirts made of denim or twill material are allowed for daily wear if they: are clean, well-maintained;

(b) do not have holes, rips, frayed edges on the pockets and/or legs;

(c) colors other than blue (i.e. black, tan, white, green, etc.). A Service Chief has discretion to allow blue jeans for specific employees and/or occupations based on their assigned work tasks;

(d) are not neon-colored;

(e) Do not have offensive advertising or designs that draw undue attention to them.

(3) Jeans fitting a description, other than those provided above, may be worn on special occasions authorized by the Health System Director.

(4) Waistbands of pants should be worn at the waist. Exposed underwear or other clothing that reveals or calls attention to private parts or is otherwise sexually suggestive or provocative is not acceptable.

(5) Hats or head cover unless it is a part of the required uniform or while assigned to work outside.

(6) Clothing that creates a distraction or disturbance from a positive business environment or a service focus. Articles of clothing that advertise, denote gang involvement or racial/ethnic/sexual messages are prohibited in the work place as well as items (including hats, caps, and etc.) with offensive slogans or pictures, political slogans and/or derogatory words. Tattoos or body art must be covered to the extent possible. Political campaign buttons are prohibited.

(7) Earphones-Earphones associated with radios/CD players/televisions or telephones are not appropriate in patent care areas and hallways of the workplace. Earphones do not promote good communication between patients, visitors, and staff, nor do they promote a safe, caring and professional atmosphere for our customers.

(8) Flip-flops, slides and similar styles are NOT authorized footwear. See attachment A for examples of unauthorized footwear.

d. Personal Hygiene: Good oral/personal hygiene and cleanliness are essential to the workplace and all employees shall be conscientious of personal hygiene (i.e. body odor, hair, nails, and etc.) at all times.

e. Special Requests: Employees with specific clothing requests should discuss their needs with their supervisor or service chief. Special requests should be made in writing to the responsible manager. Reasonable exceptions may be made to accommodate injuries, disabilities and for religious reasons.

f. Contract Staff: Physicians, house staff, students, agency personnel, temporary workers, student workers, vendors, contractors providing services in ECHCS patient care or public areas must agree to adhere to the ECHCS Attire Guidelines.

g. Exceptions: Service Chiefs may request from the Health System Director specific exceptions for special occasions or events such as holiday celebrations, commemorative days, or periods of inclement weather. All exceptions must be developed in consideration of the nature of

the work, location of the work area and proximity to patients and the public. The clothing must be clean, neat, and well maintained.

h. Definitions:

(1) Appropriate fit: refers to clothing that is suitable and properly fitting in size and shape.

(2) Business Casual attire- refers to dresses, tailored or docker-type slacks; open-collar, polo styled or collared shirts; sweaters and turtlenecks; skirts/slacks with blouse combinations; and pantsuits. Sport coats and ties are optional. Business casual attire is worn by personnel in non-clinical or office settings.

(3) Clinical Wear: Refer to applicable uniform policies.

(4) Formal Business attire: refers to business suits, sport coats and tie for men or business suits, pant suits and dresses for women. Formal business attire is typically worn by management who has frequent contact with outside business associates or the public.

(5) Image: Attire must be smooth, pressed, clean and whole. Casual clothing or an unkempt appearance is inconsistent with the professional image and reputation of ECHCS.

5. CONCURRENCES: 05, ECHCS Labor Management Forum, 00Q
If there is a conflict between the provisions of this policy and the applicable bargaining unit agreement, the terms of the bargaining unit agreement will prevail.

6. REFERENCES:

VHA Handbook 1850.4, Employee Uniforms, November 1, 2002

Medical Center Policy 07B-02-Facility Access and Identification OSHA Regulation 29 CFR 1910.132 and 1910.136, February 1, 2007, ECHCS Policy 111-12, Hand Hygiene

7. RESCISSION: Medical Center Memorandum 00-6 dated May 23,2012

8. REVIEW DATE: August 2015
This policy will remain in effect until renewed, replaced or rescinded.

LYNETTE A ROFF
Director, VA Eastern Colorado HCS

Attachment: A – Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Footwear

00-06
ATTACHMENT A

Examples of Acceptable Sandal-Type Footwear	Examples of Unacceptable Footwear