

## Exposure to Infectious and Environmental Hazards Policy

### Prevention

The Division of Physician Assistant Studies at West Virginia University follows the guidelines and recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regarding the use of Standard Precautions to prevent the spread of infection and reduce occupational exposure to blood and body fluid pathogens. Current CDC recommendations for Standard Precautions include:

1. Proper hand hygiene
  - Hands should be washed with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty or soiled with blood or other body fluids, or after caring for patients with known or suspected infectious diarrhea
  - If hands are not visibly soiled an alcohol-based hand rub may be used
  - Hands should be washed in each of the following instances:
    - Before touching a patient, even if gloves will be worn
    - After contact with a patient's intact skin
    - After removing gloves
    - After any contact with body fluids or excretions, mucus membranes, non-intact skin and wound dressings
    - After contact with inanimate objects, including medical equipment, in the immediate vicinity of the patient
    - Before eating and after using a restroom
2. Use of personal protective equipment (gloves, gown, mask, etc.)
  - Gloves must be worn when there is a risk of contact with or when handling blood or body fluids or when there is potential for contact with mucous membranes, non-intact skin, or contaminated equipment
  - Masks, protective eyewear, and gowns must be worn along with gloves when performing or assisting with procedures with a risk of body fluid or other hazardous materials splashes or sprays
3. Safe use of injections and sharps
  - Work in well-lit areas and keep sharps disposal containers within easy reach
  - Use self-sheathing needles and needleless systems when possible
  - Do not recap needles unless required by the specific procedure being performed

- Keep exposed sharps in your view and be aware of people around you
  - Place all needles and disposable sharps in designated puncture resistant containers as soon as possible after use
  - Keep fingers away from the opening of sharps containers
4. Safe handling of potentially contaminated surfaces or equipment
    - Areas in which patient care activities are performed should be cleaned and disinfected at the conclusion of the procedure
    - Reusable medical equipment should be cleaned and disinfected (or sterilized) according to the manufacturer's instructions
  5. Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette
    - Cover your mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
    - Use the nearest waste receptacle to dispose of tissue after use
    - Perform hand hygiene after contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects
    - Wear a mask when examining a patient with symptoms of a respiratory infection

Before any patient care or laboratory experience occurs, all WVU physician assistant students must complete yearly OSHA training and education regarding needle stick/sharps procedures and prevention of blood borne pathogens. The course is available in SOLE as a course called "OSHA." Each rotation site for students should have a working needle stick/sharps policy in place. Before beginning any rotation, a student must complete any site-specific safety and security training requirements.

Students must notify the program's Director of Clinical Education and either the course director (if in the didactic phase) or the clinical preceptor (if in the clinical phase) as soon as possible following any exposure to bodily fluids or potentially serious infectious disease.

## **Post-exposure protocol**

Should an exposure to blood and/or other body fluid or a needle stick injury occur, the procedure for obtaining appropriate medical care is as follows:

1. When an exposure occurs: Wounds and skin sites that have been in contact with blood or body fluids should be washed with soap and water; eyes and mucous membranes should be flushed with water if there has been a contact with blood or body fluids. There is no evidence that the use of antiseptics for wound care or expressing fluid by squeezing the wound further reduces the risk for HIV transmission. However, the use of antiseptics is not contraindicated. Use of caustic agents, e.g., bleach, is not recommended.
2. All exposures to blood or body fluids must be reported immediately to the preceptor AND to the program's Director of Clinical Education. The Director of Clinical Education will assist in

the notification of the appropriate medical care providers (employee health office, nursing supervisor, WVU infectious disease specialist or emergency department) that the student is reporting to them for initiation of Exposure to Blood Borne Pathogen Protocol and ensure that the plan is working smoothly. The DCE will make sure that the student is appropriately excused from the rotation to complete this workup.

3. Medical Evaluation: It is extremely important that medical evaluation take place immediately because treatment decisions must be made within 2 hours of exposure. HIV prophylaxis for high-risk exposure appears most effective if started within 2–4 hours. It is also extremely important to evaluate the donor's risk status immediately.
4. Medical Evaluation Facilities:
  - a. If the incident occurs **on the WVU Campus or within the Morgantown area** during regular working hours, the student should report IMMEDIATELY to WVU Healthcare Employee Health located on the second floor of J.W. Ruby Memorial Hospital, adjacent to the Health Sciences Center. Regular business hours are 6:30 AM -4:30 PM Monday-Friday. Employee Health phone number: 304-598-4160. If an incident occurs outside of regular Employee Health business hours, the student should report to the Emergency Department at J. W. Ruby Memorial Hospital and notify the PA program's Director of Clinical Education as soon as possible.
  - b. If the incident occurs during a supervised clinical rotation **outside of the Morgantown area**, the student should follow the infection control policy and procedures required for that facility. **In the absence of a specific facility policy regarding exposures, the student should report IMMEDIATELY to the nearest Emergency Department for evaluation and treatment, and notify the PA program's Director of Clinical Education as soon as possible.**
  - c. If the incident occurs **at United Hospital Center**, the student should immediately report to Employee Health during regular business hours, and to the Clinical Coordinator (681-342-1658) outside of regular business hours. A packet containing the appropriate orders and forms to be completed by the student can be obtained at either the Employee Health Office or Clinical Coordinator's office. Lab orders for the source patient are also included.
  - d. If the incident occurs **at St. Joseph's Hospital Buckhannon**, the student should immediately report to Employee Health during regular business hours, and to the Emergency Department outside of regular business hours.
  - e. If the incident occurs **at the Fairmont Regional Medical Center**, the student should immediately report to Employee Health (304-367-7487) for occurrences that happen Monday-Friday from 7:30AM – 4:00PM, or contact the House

Supervisor (304-367-7471) during off hours, holidays, and weekends. Online incident reporting should be completed ASAP and include data collection of the source, amount and type of fluid or material, severity and mechanism of injury, device and brand involved in injury, and comments from the student with regard to how the injury may have been prevented.

## Financial responsibility and program participation

1. Financial responsibility: Students will be financially responsible for all costs incurred during compliance with this policy, including emergency treatment, laboratory evaluation, medical treatment, and follow-up care. (See Student Health Policy).
2. Program Participation: Continued participation in the activities of the PA program will not be affected by any injury or illness that occurs while enrolled provided the student continues to meet all technical standards and fulfill all defined requirements for program progression and is not directly infectious by way of routine contact.

## Applicable ARC-PA Standards

Fourth Edition (through August 31, 2020)

A1.03g The sponsoring institution is responsible for addressing appropriate security and personal safety measures for PA students and faculty in all locations where instruction occurs

A1.05 The sponsoring institution *must* provide academic and student health services to PA students that are *equivalent* to those services provided other *comparable* students of the institution.

A3.08 The program *must* inform students of written policies addressing student exposure to infectious and environmental hazards before students undertake any educational activities that would place them at risk.

ANNOTATION: Policies related to infectious and environmental hazards are expected to address methods of prevention; procedures for care and treatment after exposure, including definition of financial responsibility.

Fifth Edition (effective September 1, 2020)

A1.02 The sponsoring institution is responsible for:

g) documenting appropriate security and personal safety measures for PA students and faculty in all locations where instruction occurs

A1.04 The sponsoring institution must provide academic support and student services to PA students that are equivalent to those services provided to other comparable students of the institution.

A3.08 The program must define, publish, make readily available and consistently apply policies addressing student exposure to infectious and environmental hazards before students undertake any educational activities which would place them at risk. Those policies must: a) address methods of prevention, b) address procedures for care and treatment after exposure, and c) clearly define financial responsibility.

Approved: October 2019  
Next Review: September 2020