

# Professional conduct guidelines

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## Purpose

Maine Medical Center, its employees and the members of its Medical Staff recognize their considerable interdependence in the rapidly changing healthcare environment. They acknowledge that their ability jointly to deliver safe, high quality health care and education depend in large part upon their ability to communicate well, collaborate effectively, and work as a team to optimize and monitor outcomes.

Maine Medical Center, its employees and Medical Staff further acknowledge that there are many participants in the process of effective health care, including patients, their families, nurses and other hospital staff, physicians, and allied health professionals. We believe that working harmoniously is a necessary aspect of modern health care. All parties affirm that recipients and providers of care must be treated in a dignified, respectful manner at all times to accomplish their mutual goal of high quality health care.

Maine Medical Center, its employees and Medical Staff further affirm their mutual responsibility to work together in an ongoing, positive, dynamic process, which requires continual communication and feedback. Both agree to devote the necessary time and resources to achieve these goals and maintain a positive, collaborative relationship among them and with other providers and recipients of care.

## Examples

The following are examples of desirable and undesirable behaviors; this list is not intended to be all-inclusive, rather, it is presented as a guide.

Desirable Behaviors	Undesirable Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complies with practice standards</li><li>• Personally discusses perceived problems in a constructive and timely manner</li><li>• Completes committee duties when assigned</li><li>• Complies with infection control policies</li><li>• Recognizes and respects unique vantage points of team members</li><li>• Pursues change through proper channels</li><li>• Responds to patient needs in a timely manner</li><li>• Give everyone our focused attention and our full mental and physical capacity</li><li>• Accurately reports care events which present an opportunity for improvement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Documents physical examination elements not performed</li><li>• Operates or treats patients when not physically or mentally able (impaired, injured, fatigued, etc.)</li><li>• Belittles or demeans learners</li><li>• Engages in non-clinical conversations during patient care</li><li>• Neglects to effectively communicate patient information to covering physician or consultants</li><li>• Uses threatening or abusive language, action, or gesture, profanity or similarly offensive language</li><li>• Makes negative comments to patients about other physicians or hospital personnel or their treatment in the hospital</li></ul>

## **Policy**

In order to accomplish these goals, Maine Medical Center employees and Medical Staff agree to the following principles and guidelines and to work collaboratively to promote them within the organization and in the community. Failure to meet these standards will result in remedial and disciplinary action as provided by the Medical Staff Bylaws.

### **Physician Well-being**

Maine Medical Center employees and Medical Staff agree that everyone deserves our focused attention and our full mental and physical capacity. Members of our Medical Staff will not, and are not expected to, participate in patient care when impaired. To that end, practitioners who are impaired physically, mentally, or by substance abuse will be supported and directed to appropriate treatment. Members of the health care team have a responsibility to assist in identification of impaired colleagues.

### **Respectful Treatment**

All members of the health care team (nurses and other hospital employees, physicians, vendors, contract personnel, etc.) and all direct and indirect recipients of health care (patients, their families, visitors, etc.) shall be treated in a respectful, dignified manner at all times, acknowledging psychological, social, cultural and spiritual needs. We will respect the knowledge, dignity, and perspective of others. Differences of opinion will be resolved with the best interest of the patient in mind. We respect the autonomy of our patients, and decisions made by them or their lawful proxies. Language, nonverbal behavior, gestures, and attitudes shall reflect this respect and dignity of the individual and affirm his/her value to the process of effective, efficient health care.

### **Communication**

Maine Medical Center employees and Medical Staff agree that all communication (oral, written, electronic, and non-verbal, etc.) shall be timely, professional, respectful, thorough, and with the best interest of all direct and indirect recipients and providers of healthcare considered. We agree to refrain from making entries into the medical record that would be considered accusatory, offensive, or otherwise inappropriate by an impartial body of Medical Staff members. Maine Medical Center employees and Medical Staff agree not to use language that is profane, vulgar, sexually suggestive or explicit, degrading, or intimidating, racially, ethnically, or religiously slurring in professional settings.

### **Behavior**

Maine Medical Center employees and Medical Staff agree to refrain from any behavior that is deemed to be harassing, sexually or otherwise, including but not limited to unwanted touching, sexual touching, sexually-oriented or degrading jokes or comments, requests for sexual favors, obscene gestures or physically aggressive behavior, physical throwing of objects, or making inappropriate comments regarding physicians, nurses and other hospital staff, patients, family members or visitors. We agree

to refrain from behavior that disrupts the function of the care team or the operations of Maine Medical Center.

### **Citizenship**

Maine Medical Center employees and Medical Staff agree that good citizenship is an important facet of professional conduct. Citizenship on our staff includes being a mentor, teacher, and lifelong learner. It means upholding one's mutually agreed-upon responsibilities to the Medical Staff, the Medical Center, one's Department and Division, our patients, our colleagues, and our community. It means making prudent use of the resources available to us, and accepting our stewardship for those resources. It means conducting ourselves with dignity, integrity, and honesty, and accepting responsibility for our actions.

### **Professional Competence and Performance**

Maine Medical Center employees and the Medical staff are dedicated to promotion of professional competence and performance improvement. Medical staff members acknowledge our responsibility to practice within the scope of our education, training and experience and to maintain competence. Maine Medical Center employees and Medical Staff agree to actively participate in process improvement and safety and quality initiatives. We agree to give all parties prompt, direct, constructive feedback when concerns arise regarding behavior or care in clinical, educational or other professional settings. The parties recognize the necessity of describing such behavior in objective, behavioral terms and that such feedback should be given directly to the person(s) involved through appropriate channels, in a confidential, private setting.

### **Confidentiality**

Maine Medical Center employees and Medical Staff agree to maintain complete confidentiality of patient care information at all times, in a manner consistent with generally accepted principles of medical confidentiality. The parties further recognize that hospital employees and physicians have the right to have certain personal and professional issues dealt with in a confidential manner, including such things as performance problems and concerns about competency. Employees and physicians agree to maintain this confidentiality and to seek the proper, professional, objective arenas in which to deal with these issues.

### **Clarification of Roles**

Maine Medical Center employees and Medical Staff agree that the delivery of patient care involves a complex, dynamic set of roles and responsibilities and that clarity and agreement on these roles and responsibilities is necessary. All parties agree to work together to achieve and maintain clarity and agreement on these roles and to support each other in the carrying out of these responsibilities.

### **Access to care**

Maine Medical Center and the Medical Staff will work together to provide access to care for our community. Access to care will not be limited based on race, color, national origin, citizenship, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age or disability. Both will respond to requests for treatment or evaluation in a timely manner.

### **Conflicts of interest**

Maine Medical Center, its employees and Medical Staff will disclose any potential conflicts of interest and will work to resolve them. Conflict of interest may be present when treating family members or those with whom no physician-patient relationship exists. Medical Staff members will refrain from treating first degree relatives and those with whom no physician-patient relationship exists while patient is hospitalized, by prescribing controlled substances, or for mental illness, except under emergency circumstances or if no other qualified physician can render care.

### **Process**

Maine Medical Center employees and Medical Staff strive for a culture of communication, teamwork, respect and professionalism. Our goal is to resolve issues concerning professional conduct between the affected parties in a confidential and collegial manner, with mediation, if this is necessary. When there is a lack of satisfactory resolution, a repetitive pattern of incidents, or a single egregious incident, we will invoke a more formal process, as outlined below. All aspects of this process are protected as peer review, and documentation will be filed in the practitioner's performance profile folder.

# Professional Conduct Procedure

Our goal is the resolution of any issues or concerns by those directly involved. Each successive step is taken only if there is lack of resolution at a lower level or if conduct is of a nature that more formal action is required early in the process. All proceedings are confidential and protected under peer review, with documentation maintained in the physician's performance profile folder in the Medical Staff Office. In extraordinary circumstances there may be grounds for precautionary suspension of privileges considered and pursued under Article 7 of the Medical Staff Bylaws. A full description of action related to questions of competence is found in Article 7 of the Medical Bylaws.

