

**CONSOLIDATED MAIL OUTPATIENT PHARMACY  
POLICY MEMORANDUM**

**SUBJECT: Employee Responsibilities and Conduct**

- 1. PURPOSE:** To establish employee responsibilities and the requirements for acceptable employee conduct.
- 2. POLICY:** Appropriate conduct and compliance with VA and Charleston CMOP policies are conditions of employment and essential to provide quality services for our patients and medical centers and a safe and productive environment for all employees.
- 3. RESPONSIBILITIES:**
  - A. CMOP Director:
    - 1) Developing local policy guidelines that are consistent with VA guidelines for personnel issues and conduct
    - 2) Ensuring overall compliance for the facility
  - B. CMOP Supervisors:
    - 1) Educating and providing guidance to employees concerning personnel policies and appropriate employee conduct
    - 2) Ensuring staff compliance with this and other relevant VA/VHA policies governing staff behavior and conduct
  - C. All CMOP staff, including VA (government) employees, contract employees, and volunteers:
    - 1) Complying with this and other relevant VA/VHA policies governing employee responsibilities and conduct
    - 2) Reporting violations to their supervisors
- 4. PROCEDURES:**
  - A. **ATTITUDE:** All CMOP staff must work as a team to achieve our mission of dispensing and mailing prescriptions in a timely, efficient, accurate, and cost-effective manner.
    - 1) Managers, supervisors, pharmacists, and area coordinators are expected to set a good example of carrying work out in a positive business-like manner to reinforce responsible conduct in other CMOP staff members.
    - 2) CMOP staff members are required to:
      - a. Be consistently cooperative and courteous in nature

- b. Contribute positively to the effective operation of CMOP and its work environment
  - c. Treat others with respect and dignity, even under stressful circumstances
  - d. Resolve differences of opinion in a business-like manner
- B. **ATTENTION TO DUTIES:** Employees must pay strict attention to their duties and avoid distractions that can lead to errors or delays and potentially jeopardize patient safety. Visiting with other employees and visitors during duty hours is not acceptable behavior. Be alert, courteous, helpful and understanding but brief. Do not engage in conversations within designated patient safety zones. Talking within these zones is limited to immediate prescription processing concerns.
- C. **CHAIN OF COMMAND:** Employees are to receive directions/assignment of duties from their supervisors or designees. Employees are expected to cooperate with area coordinators. Resistance to instruction or insubordination will not be tolerated. Deliberate failure to follow instruction may be cause for disciplinary action up to and including admonishment, reprimand, or suspension.
- D. **PERSONAL APPEARANCE:** Staff members need to be neat, clean, well groomed and appropriately attired for the work area while on duty. Staff should arrive at work “clean, comfortable, and covered”. To be considered appropriate, clothing must cover legs to the lower calf. Inappropriate working attire includes, but is not limited to, shorts, spaghetti-strapped tops, sheer clothing, bare midriffs, and excessively baggy or flowing clothing or accessories. It is expected that long hair hanging to or below shoulder length will be pulled back, put up in some acceptable fashion or otherwise adequately confined for safety reasons. Shoes must be clean, closed-toed, and serviceable and offer appropriate protection for the assigned work area.
- E. **CONDUCT:** Supervisors and staff members are expected to plan and accomplish their daily work in a manner that contributes to the success of the VA CMOP program. Each staff member’s actions and behavior, while on duty and off, reflect not only on the individual but also on both CMOP and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Staff members are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times.

Successful workers consistently:

- 1) Exhibit responsiveness,
- 2) Carry out work activities or program management duties in an appropriate, responsible manner,
- 3) Cooperate with peers and those in authority,
- 4) Follow through to project completion.
- 5) Put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.

Engaging in negative behaviors such as the following is unacceptable and subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal:

- 1) Language or behavior that is perceived as violent, intimidating, harassing, threatening or assaultive towards others and/or verbally or physically aggressive. Persons committing acts of violence will be reported to the North Charleston Police and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Refer to CMOPPM 766-34: Violence in the Workplace.
- 2) Theft or inappropriate removal, treatment or possession of government property, and/or failure to report knowledge of the above in accordance with CMOP SOP 766-11 Report of Survey
- 3) Falsification of timekeeping records
- 4) Breaches of confidentiality
- 5) Working under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs or while impaired by other substances.
- 6) Possession, distribution, sale, transfer, or use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or weapons on CMOP premises
- 7) Smoking and use of smokeless tobacco inside the CMOP building
- 8) Sexual or other unlawful or unwelcome harassment including conduct that can be considered sexually harassing, abusive, coercive and/or intimidating. Sexual harassment in any form is inappropriate and unacceptable conduct that will not be tolerated at any level. Sexual harassment is illegal conduct that undermines the employment or contractual relationship, has a substantial negative effect on morale, and interferes with the productivity and efficiency of CMOP.
- 9) Use of vulgar, obscene, or abusive language at work or on CMOP premises
- 10) Horseplay, loud and disruptive talking, or actions that would cause unsafe working conditions
- 11) Other behavior, such as, promotion of gambling, betting and lotteries on CMOP (or any federal) premises; disclosure or misuse of confidential patient information; and inappropriate relations with businesses or persons seeking or doing business with VA
- 12) Starting or spreading rumors about other people or events; such unacceptable behavior is an unnecessary distraction that can cause work related errors, co-worker discontent, work processing delays and in no way positively contributes to the effective operation of the CMOP.
- 13) Using, or transferring to any other unauthorized person, drugs stocked by the CMOP for authorized dispensing to eligible veterans. Medications prescribed by a physician for an employee's personal use and/or over-the-counter medication items brought into the CMOP for an employee's personal use may only be consumed in common areas such as the lunch room, the respective locker rooms and/or an assigned office work area. Such medications must be securely stored in an employee's assigned locker unless other special storage arrangements are made (such as refrigerated storage) and approved in cooperation with the employee's supervisor and/or a management

representative. Personal use medications are prohibited on the production floor without supervisor's approval.

- F. ATTENDANCE: Regular attendance on the job is critical. Staff members are expected to be on duty and at their assigned workstations during the full period of their tour of duty unless absent on approved leave, or during designated breaks or lunch periods. They will strictly observe the beginning and ending times established for the tour of duty and strictly adhere to established break and lunch periods.

Brief absences from assigned work areas require notification of the area coordinator. Extended absences from assigned work areas require supervisor notification. An employee's failure to notify his/her supervisor and to request leave for an absence may be considered absence without leave (AWOL) and cause for disciplinary action.

- 1) Tardiness: Repeated tardiness will not be tolerated. Tardiness could be a cause for an employee to be charged absence without leave (AWOL).
- 2) Breaks & Lunch Periods: Employees will receive one 15-minute break per four hours worked and a 30-minute lunch period. Breaks and lunch period will be confined to the time allotted. Breaks are not to be taken in any production area. Supervisors will advise employees of particular arrangements necessary for break times in their area. Break time WILL NOT be added to periods of leave or the beginning or end of the employee's tour of duty or meal breaks. Also, the two 15-minute breaks may NOT be combined into one 30-minute break. Supervisor/lead technician will schedule employee's 30-minute lunch period. Breaks and lunch periods must be taken and employees should not work through them.
- 3) Leave: This section regarding leave [4.F.3] is only applicable to VA (government) employees. All types of leave are charged in quarter hour increments (15 minutes).
  - a. Annual leave must be requested and approved in advance through the VISTA system, except in an emergency situation. Requests for annual leave (AL) will be considered in light of current and anticipated workloads. In case of an emergency, employee must notify his/her supervisor within the first two (2) hours of the beginning of his/her scheduled tour of duty to request annual leave and promptly enter electronic leave request upon his/her return to duty. If the emergency occurs while on duty, the supervisor must be notified prior to the employee leaving the building.
  - b. Sick Leave is used when an employee is incapacitated to perform duties by physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth; when an employee receives medical, dental, or optical examinations or treatments; when through exposure to a contagious disease, the presence of the employee at the place of duty would jeopardize the health of others; and for purposes related to the adoption of a child. Sick leave (SL) should not be

abused; it is considered as insurance against lost income during periods of extended illness and should be used responsibly.

- i. If an employee becomes ill while at work, he/she must notify his/her supervisor, and, when possible, enter an electronic leave request through the VistA computer system prior to leaving. If an employee is not able to report for duty because of illness, he/she (or a responsible person) must notify his/her supervisor within the first two (2) hours of the beginning of his/her scheduled tour of duty, unless there are mitigating circumstances, and promptly enter electronic leave request upon his/her return duty. (It is acceptable for employee to leave a message on the supervisor's voice mail if supervisor cannot be reached.) Employees who expect to be absent on sick leave for more than one (1) day should inform their supervisor of the approximate date that they will be able to return to duty.
- ii. Illness or injury causing absence of more than three (3) consecutive working days may require acceptable documentation.
- iii. Requests for sick leave to cover medical, dental, or optical examinations and treatments shall be submitted as far in advance as possible.
- iv. When there is reason to believe that an employee is abusing the use of sick leave, a medical certificate may be required for any period of absence.
- c. Family Friendly Leave Act (FFLA) expands the use of sick leave by permitting covered full time employees the use of sick leave (CB) to provide care for a family member\* who is incapacitated as a result of physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth; provide care for a family member as a result of medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment; or to make arrangements necessitated by the death of a family member or attend the funeral of a family member. There are annual limitations to the amount of sick leave that can be used for this purpose. Employee must notify his/her supervisor and enter an electronic leave request through the VistA computer system.

\*Family member is defined as:

- i. Spouse, and parents thereof;
- ii. Children, including adopted children, and spouses thereof;
- iii. Parents;
- iv. Brothers and sisters, and spouses thereof; and
- v. Any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.

- d. Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides covered employees who have 12 months of federal service with up to 12 administrative workweeks of unpaid leave (LWOP) during any 12 month period for a serious health condition or to care for a family member with a serious health condition. The 12 weeks of FMLA is in addition to any annual leave, sick leave, or other LWOP or compensatory time off available to the employee. An employee may choose to take FMLA in combination with any other available leave. Employee must submit written request to invoke FMLA protection through his/her supervisor and will be requested to provide necessary medical documentation to support request.
- e. Absence Without Leave is an unauthorized absence from duty. The employee receives no pay for absence without leave (AWOL). Failure to report to duty as scheduled or to call the supervisor as soon as practical may be basis for an AWOL charge. AWOL for unauthorized absence may be charged if:
  - i. An employee fails to notify his/her supervisor within the first two hours of the beginning of his/her scheduled tour, unless there are mitigating circumstances.
  - ii. An employee is not on duty for any reason without approved leave, such as returning to duty from lunch or break late, leaving early, or being away from the assigned area without authorization.
  - iii. An employee does not return to duty, as directed, at the end of a period of approved absence.
  - iv. An employee does not have leave to cover an absence and is not approved for FMLA.
- f. Information about other types of leave, such as Voluntary Leave Transfer, Court Leave, Military Leave, Bone Marrow & Organ Donor Leave, etc. can be obtained from the employee's supervisor, Program Specialist in the Director's Office, or Human Resources Office.

#### G. SECURITY:

1) Maintaining security of the CMOP building, equipment, drugs and supplies is the responsibility of all employees. Entrance to the CMOP will be limited to authorized personnel. Employees will be issued a security badge and personal access code for entry to the building. Employees will wear their identification badges at all times while on CMOP premises. The badge will be worn in front on the torso with the photo displayed so the person's name and picture is easily seen

by someone facing/speaking to that individual. Temporary badges will be provided to visitors when they check in. Refer to CMOPPM 766-2, Environmental Management Plan and CMOPPM 766-33, Issuance and Protection of Identification Badges and Security Cards.

- 2) Authorized vehicle parking spaces designated by the Director are provided within the fenced area in front of the CMOP building. Restricted parking areas include those spaces that are clearly marked with signage, such as handicapped parking spaces (current handicapped placard/sticker or license plate required) and visitor parking spaces. No Parking areas include curbs painted yellow, common through traffic lanes including parking lot perimeter fence, vehicle entry/exit gate areas and the back of the building. Staff violating restricted parking spaces will receive two (2) courtesy warnings and one counseling. Any additional failure to follow proper parking instructions will be treated as misconduct and may be subject to progressive disciplinary actions.
- 3) Entrance to the CMOP will be limited to authorized personnel. Department of Veterans Affairs employees or visitors having business related appointments or meetings with designated CMOP personnel can visit the CMOP for official business purposes when properly authorized. Visitors to the facility for the purpose of a tour must follow the procedures for all short-term visitors. The tours must be pre-approved by the Facility Director/Facility Manager or his/her designee prior to the event. In the absence of management staff or Director's designee having responsibility for the work area, the CMOP will be securely locked.

#### H. PERSONAL EQUIPMENT/ITEMS:

- 1) Production area:

Personal items, except as noted below, are not allowed in the production area at any time. Employees are not allowed to have purses or bags, fanny packs, backpacks, handbags, etc. in the production area. Coats/jackets/sweaters/sweatshirts are allowed while they are being worn. Lockers are available for storage of personal items. Music listening devices such as radios, MP3 players, and CD players are permitted provided they are kept on the staff member's person at all times. Headphones/ear buds must be used and are limited to use in one ear. External speakers are not allowed. For the safety of employees, listening volume must allow the employee to hear sounds of voices or machines in their immediate area. Employees will remove headphones/ear buds and lower the device volume when conversing with other employees on official CMOP business.

- 2) Facility-wide:  
All employees must follow procedure governing use and tracking of personally-owned property per CMOP SOP 766-13 Personally-Owned Property. Employees are required to obtain approval from their supervisors and inform the facility Accountable Officer or Non-Expendable Technician prior to bringing any personally-owned property to a VA facility and placing the item into use in order to ensure the workplace is free of hazardous possessions.
- I. **SMOKING:** Smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco are prohibited inside the CMOP building. A designated smoking area is provided outside of the building. Cigarettes and other tobacco products are prohibited on the production floor.
- J. **PHONES/PERSONAL CALLS:** The use of telephones/cell phones for personal matters should be limited to infrequent, short conversations of necessity and is otherwise restricted to emergencies. It is the employee's responsibility to notify family members and caretakers of the correct number for them to use in case of an emergency. Urgent or emergent messages received through the main number will be relayed through the employee's supervisor, or designee, and will be communicated to the employee as soon as possible. Personal cell phones are not allowed in the production area. Refer to CMOP SOP 766-16 Personal Electronic Devices.
- Note: Official use of cellular telephones by authorized personnel conducting CMOP business is not prohibited. Examples may include maintenance or systems troubleshooting, supervisory communication with vendors, etc.*
- K. **EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION:** Each employee is expected to review bulletin boards, electronic message boards, electronic messages, and Outlook email at least weekly.
- L. **TRAINING:** Mandatory VA training must be completed at least 30 days prior to due date, if applicable.
- M. **FINANCIAL DEALINGS:** Employees will not engage in financial dealings with patients, volunteers, students, or staff members. This includes loaning, borrowing, making purchases, selling items and getting checks cashed or accepting money, gifts or tips. The VA does not desire to become involved in the financial affairs of its employees. However, if repeated complaints of non-payment of just financial obligations are received from creditors, action will be taken as authorized by applicable regulations.
- N. **Utilization/Upkeep of EQUIPMENT/Facility:** Employees are required to use tools and equipment properly, to keep them clean and in good operating condition, and to appropriately store them when not in use. If an employee discovers that repairs to equipment, tools, furnishings, or other items are needed, he/she should report

- the need to his/her supervisor. Additionally, CMOP is a dispensing pharmacy and employees are required to assist in keeping the facility clean in accordance with applicable standards.
- O. **CONSERVING UTILITIES:** Employees are expected to turn off unnecessary lights and water faucets to help conserve utilities in their areas.
- P. **ACCIDENTS:** Employees are required to follow established safe working practices, including the use of approved gloves when using utility knives, and to report unsafe conditions or violations they observe to their supervisor. VA employees involved in an on-the-job accident, whether or not he/she is injured, must report the incident to his/her supervisor as soon as possible, and both must complete required reports (VAF 2162, and CA-1 and/or CA-2 forms). If necessary, the supervisor will give the employee a CMOP "Employee Health Authorization Form" and send the employee to Employee Health Services at the Charleston VAMC for assessment and possible treatment. If employee elects to go to their private physician instead, he/she must notify their supervisor. Contract employees must notify their supervisor if they are involved in an on-the-job accident. They will be referred for care and complete necessary paperwork in accordance with the contracted organization's policy. If the employee's injury is serious or life threatening, the supervisor will call 9-911. Refer to CMOPPM 766-41 Employee Medical Emergency Response.
- Q. **REPORTING FIRE OR OTHER EMERGENCIES:** Any employee who discovers a fire should immediately report it by pulling an alarm at the nearest building fire alarm box, and notifying anyone in the area. For all other emergencies dial 9-911.
- R. **FOOD & DRINK IN PRODUCTION AREA:** Food will not be prepared, stored or eaten within prohibited areas in CMOP production areas. Beverages in open containers are also strictly prohibited in these areas. Beverages are permitted at workstations within the restricted areas only if they are in a spill-proof container and straws are not inserted into the drinking container at any time. Refer to CMOP SOP 766-14: Employee Guidelines for Hand Hygiene and Infection Control Procedures.
- S. **CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Employees must keep their supervisor advised of their current address, telephone number and person to be notified in case of an emergency.
- T. **CONFIDENTIALITY:** CMOP has a responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of patients and other protected information.
- 1) CMOP staff must not release or discuss any patient information, including prescription information, with any unauthorized person at any time or in public places, including lobby and break room. In addition, staff members

will log off their production system workstations to prevent unauthorized individuals from viewing or potentially altering confidential information.

- 2) Sensitive information concerning personnel and management issues will be maintained in strict confidence and utilized only by authorized individuals.
- 3) Any knowledge of a breach of confidentiality should immediately be reported to a supervisor. If a breach occurs, an investigation will be performed wherein the facts will be gathered and appropriate action will be taken based upon the findings.

## **5. REFERENCES:**

- A. VA Handbook 5011 & Directive 5011/2, SUBJ: Hours of Duty and Leave
- B. VA Handbook 5025 Appendix A: Fourteen Principles of Ethical Conduct for Federal Employees: April 15, 2002
- C. CMOPPM 766-5, Use of Tobacco Products
- D. CMOPPM 766-13, Retention and Disposition of Sensitive Data
- E. CMOPPM 766-41, Employee Medical Emergency Response
- F. CMOPPM 766-2, Environmental Management Program
- G. CMOPPM 766-33, Issuance and Use of PIV Badges and Facility Access Badges
- H. CMOPPM 766-34, Violence in the Workplace
- I. CMOPPM 766-21 Prevention of Sexual Harassment
- J. CMOP SOP 766-16, Personal Electronic Devices
- K. CMOP SOP 766-14, Employee Guidelines for Hand Hygiene and Infection Control Procedures
- L. CMOP SOP 766-11, Report of Survey
- M. CMOP SOP 766-13, Personally-Owned Property

**6. RESCISSION:** CMOPPM 766-38 dated October 19, 2012.

**7. REISSUE DATE:** November 6, 2018.

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy (CMOP)  
Charleston, SC

CMOPPM 766-38  
November 6, 2015

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CMOP-Charleston