



**Student Health Center**

**Use of Chaperones during Sensitive Medical Examinations**

**BACKGROUND**

Clinicians are taught to be sensitive to patient modesty as part of their training. Discussions for the use of chaperones during sensitive medical examinations began in the 1970s to protect the interests of both patients and clinicians. While there are valid arguments for and against the use of chaperones, both the American Medical Association and the American College Health Association have recommended their use.

Recent societal changes empowering individuals to speak up about improper sexual behavior may make patients more wary of the intentions of their medical provider, and providers may also be concerned about alleged misconduct that never happened but is impossible to disprove without witnesses. The purpose of this policy is to clarify the expectations for the use of medical chaperones for the clinical staff at the Student Health Center at SUNY Old Westbury. Chaperones will be utilized to increase the dignity, comfort, and safety of the patients and to promote the professional nature and accountability of the providers.

**Policy**

- 1) When a sensitive medical examination of breast(s), genitalia, and rectum is indicated, the medical provider is expected to have a chaperone present for the examination, and will document their presence in the clinical note.
- 2) Chaperones will be health care professionals who are employed by the Student Health Center and/or Athletics and will be the same sex as the student if possible.
- 3) When a chaperone is used for an exam, they will not leave the room while the patient is unclothed and the medical provider is still present in the exam room. Students undergoing chaperoned examinations will be assured of time alone with the medical provider once the examination is completed and they are clothed. This will allow the student the privacy to disclose information and ask questions.
- 4) If a student declines having a chaperone present, they will be rescheduled with a medical provider/nurse team they are comfortable with, or will be referred to a provider in the community.