



**NORTH WEST REGIONAL HEALTH
AUTHORITY**

WRITTEN RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ON POLICY
DOCUMENTS REGARDING CARE OF PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES

February 03, 2023

This report addresses questions raised from an external stakeholder regarding policy on treatment and care of patients with disabilities within the NWRHA. The following areas of responses are listed below:

1. We are currently trying to determine whether the NWRHA has a specific policy on administering care to persons with disabilities and if so, if that could be shared with us?
2. Does the NWRHA have any policies as it relates to the timing of treatment administered to persons with disabilities (particularly persons with developmental disabilities who are mentally incapacitated/ considered medically vulnerable) who are brought in via its emergency department?
3. Does the NWRHA have any policy on the housing of adults with developmental disabilities (whose mental ages may vary throughout various stages of childhood) in adult wards?
 - a. Are such persons allowed to be housed with their permanent care givers while ward- without whom in many cases they are unable to function?
 - b. In the absence of their caregivers, are such persons allowed treatment by nurses who are trained to specifically deal with the needs of such individuals?
4. Does the NWRHA has any separate policy directed at persons with disabilities, can that be shared as well?

Questions from External Stakeholder re Policy on Treatment of Patients with Disabilities within the NWRHA

Questions for Written Response

1. **We are currently trying to determine whether the NWRHA has a specific policy on administering care to persons with disabilities and if so, if that could be shared with us?**

The North West Regional Health Authority (NWRHA) endeavours to ensure that a high standard of care and treatment is provided to all its patients consistent with its vision, mission and core values. There is no specific policy document that isolates the administration of care to persons with disabilities apart from mental illness; however, the health care practices and standards adopted by the Authority ensure that persons with disabilities are well cared for.

The NWRHA has oversight and management over the largest inpatient mental health institution in Trinidad and Tobago i.e. the St Ann's Hospital (SAH). The following policy and procedural documents are key in the regulation of patient care at this facility:

- Ministry of Health – Mental Health Policy 2019-2029
- NWRHA – St Ann's Hospital (SAH) Admission and Discharge Procedure
- NWRHA – SAH Clinical Handover Procedure
- NWRHA – SAH Child Evaluation Treatment Unit Standard Operating Procedure

These policy documents accomplish the following:

- Establish the standards of practice for patient admission, care, planning, and discharge of patients at St. Ann's Hospital (SAH);
- Ensure patients receive high-quality services throughout the entire administration of care;
- Regulate the effective communication of clinical requirements for patient care;
- Ensure continuity in the delivery of quality care to patients; and
- Provide governance and guidelines regarding the treatment and care within mental health.

2. **Does the NWRHA have any policies as it relates to the timing of treatment administered to persons with disabilities (particularly persons with developmental disabilities who are mentally incapacitated/ considered medically vulnerable) who are brought in via its emergency department?**

The Authority does not have any specific policy documents relating to “the timing of treatment administered to patients with disabilities”. The Authority seeks to provide medical care to patients in the least time possible. The Accident & Emergency Departments utilizes a triage system (the Canadian Triage & Acuity Scale - CTAS) to prioritize care for all patients based the presenting complaint and urgency of care required. The triage process is dynamic and extends beyond the initial assessment. Throughout the receipt of medical observation and care, a patient’s priority level may be modified by the attending clinicians to treat with the comprehensive needs of the patient.

3. **Does the NWRHA have any policy on the housing of adults with developmental disabilities (whose mental ages may vary throughout various stages of childhood) in adult wards?**

There is no specific policy document that deals with “the housing of adults with developmental disabilities in adult wards”. However, at the SAH, the chronic adult patients with developmental disabilities are cared for at a dedicated clinical unit (with both male and female wards). Admission to the facility is guided, inter alia, by the chronological age of the patient.

- a. **Are such persons allowed to be housed with their permanent care givers while warded - without whom in many cases they are unable to function?**

The Authority is guided by the existing Ministry of Health Hospital Visitation Policy. The hospital visitation hours for relatives or caregivers within the NWRHA are as follows:

- Port of Spain General Hospital (POSGH) 11:00 am to 12:00 noon daily (curtailed visiting hours due to ongoing construction)

- St James Medical Complex (SJMC) 11:00 am to 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm daily.
- St Ann’s Hospital (SAH) 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm daily

Apart from the regular visiting hours, Nursing Administration at the POSGH and SJMC facilities may allow relatives or caregivers of patients to remain with the patient for prolonged periods or overnight based on circumstances (note this is an exception to the visitation regulation and is permitted through the discretion and comprehensive evaluation of several impacting factors).

At SAH overnight visitation and prolonged stay are not permitted due to the nature of the facility. Relatives and care givers are only allowed during visiting hours to minimize potential risks and ensure the health, safety and security of patients, their relatives/caregivers and the staff of the Authority.

b. In the absence of their caregivers, are such persons allowed treatment by nurses who are trained to specifically deal with the needs of such individuals?

Upon admission to NWRHA healthcare facilities patients are assessed and constantly evaluated by the clinical team (at the SAH, the clinical team includes mental health clinicians, psychiatric nurses, and allied health professionals). Ward rounds are conducted daily by both clinicians and nursing personnel. The category of care for each patient differs and prescribes the level of care that is provided.

4. Does the NWRHA has any separate policy directed at persons with disabilities, can that be shared as well?

The Authority has no separate policy document “directed at persons with disabilities”. The Authority is guided by all national health policies of the Ministry of Health, these policies provide adequate guidance for quality clinical operations across all Regional Health Authorities. The NWRHA strives to fulfill its the mandate to provide high-quality health care for all.