



MEMORANDUM
Internal Working Document

To: Division of Youth Services Employees
From: Cynthia Owen, Director of Contract Program Monitoring
Date: September 16, 2019
Subject: Searches of Youth, Employees, Visitors

Dear DYS Staff and Community,

Thank you for your continued hard work and dedication to maintaining a safe and therapeutic environment for youth.

As you know, DYS has taken a variety of steps to ensure safety in our youth centers, especially in these last few months. Specifically, the Division made changes to expand the search procedures for youth who are being admitted to a Division youth center from a non-Division entity, for youth who are participating in family visitation, and for youth who are returning from an unsupervised pass.

Optimal safety and security in our youth centers requires a multipronged approach which includes accountability for a contraband free environment from not only our youth, but also our staff and visitors. Shortly after the youth search policy change, the Division worked to expand the policy to encompass employees, visitors, contractors, interns, volunteers, and professionals. As part of this expansion, a committee of internal and external stakeholders were assembled to thoroughly research potential options and industry best practices for allowable items and improved search processes. Additionally, DYS employees were solicited for feedback. This Division appreciated the insights from employees as it helped to build a safer environment for not only the youth in our care, but our most valuable asset--our staff.

This stakeholder group reviewed the data gathered--including responses from an internal staff survey--and developed the final recommendations.

Why adjustments to the policy are needed?

- We have seen an increase in the amount of contraband and drugs entering a secure setting. Contraband and drugs not only perpetuate addictive behaviors, and are utilized as currency but may also contribute to other significant safety issues to staff, youth and visitors.
- In addition to the increase in drug contraband, we are also experiencing an increase in fights, assaults and gang-related issues which may be related to the introduction and use of drugs.
- In order to improve safety and ensure contraband and drugs do not enter our secure settings, employees and visitors were included in the improved security practices.

What are the improvements?

- The Division of Youth Services reserves the right to conduct pat searches of employees, visitors, contractors, interns, volunteers, and professionals.
 - Personal items for the above-mentioned groups may be searched at random and/or based on reasonable suspicion that there is an attempt to bring in contraband or unauthorized property into the youth center.
- Searches for contraband within the youth centers may be conducted by a trained detection K9.



- Employees, visitors, contractors, interns, volunteers, and professionals are subject to search by a trained K9 detection dog.
- Personal cell phones and cell phone watches of employees and contractors shall be stored in the designated area to ensure they do not enter areas utilized by youth.
 - Employees/contractors may bring state-issued/contractor issued electronics into the youth center (e.g. laptops, cell phones).
- A contraband-free acknowledgment form will be signed by employees, visitors, contractors, interns, volunteers, and professionals.
- Clear bags will be provided for use by employees, contractors, interns, volunteers, and professionals.
- Visitors in need of items for an infant will be provided a clear bag with specific allowable items.
- Visitors, contractors, interns, volunteers, and professionals will pass through the metal detector, and may also be wanded.
- Vehicles in the parking lot shall be kept locked at all times.
- Vehicles on state property may not have firearms, drugs, or intoxicants.

When will these improvements occur?

As promised in an earlier communication, the recommendations were put into policy S 9.13 for an effective date of no later than October 2019. The Division will provide training to staff during the month of September.

General Q&A:

What if a person refuses to be searched?

- To ensure safety, those not adhering to the search policy will not be allowed access to the youth center.

How do I receive a phone call if I cannot have my phone in our secure settings?

- The youth center landline may be used for phone calls when needed for an emergency.
- The phone number to the control center may be provided in case of an emergency.

What can professionals and contractors bring into the secure setting?

- Only those items needed to do their job such as a laptop, notepad, and writing tool.

What are the next steps?

- The updated policy will be sent out by September 15, 2019, with an implementation date of October 1.
- The period of time prior to implementation will be used for training.
- The Division will continue to look at additional ways to effectively screen employees, visitors, and professionals.

