

<b><u>POLICY TITLE</u></b>		
<b>RESIDENTS' COMFORT FUNDS</b>		
<b><u>AUTHORIZATION</u></b> Chief Financial Officer Vice President, Clinical Operations	<b><u>DATE APPROVED</u></b> August 2012	<b><u>DATE REVISED</u></b>

## 1.0 **PURPOSE**

Fraser Health maintains and administers funds, commonly referred to as residents' comfort funds, on behalf of permanent residents within Fraser Health facilities. Residents' comfort funds are personal funds established and replenished by the resident or the resident's family. Maintenance of the residents' comfort funds must comply with Ministry of Health policy which states:

*"Health authorities must ensure service providers establish reasonable accounting and security measures to receive and control funds for the personal comfort of the client and make adequate provision for the custody and safekeeping of the client's personal funds and belongings." (Ministry of Health, Home and Community Care Policy Manual, Chapter 6, Section G, April 1, 2011)*

The objectives of Residents' Comfort Fund Policy are to:

- Provide all residents with a secure method of maintaining their personal funds.
- Promote resident independence and choice.
- Provide opportunities for residents to participate in activities and purchase desired goods and services.
- Establish a clear process that is understood by residents, family and staff regarding the purpose of and access to funds.

## 2.0 **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all individuals that administer residents' comfort funds within a Fraser Health owned and operated facility. For the purpose of this policy a resident is defined as a person who is a registered patient in one of Fraser Health's residential care units or programs including:

- Complex Care Facilities (Residential Care)
- Patient Assessment and Transition Home (PATH)
- Geriatrics Evaluation Management Program (GEM)
- Respite Units
- Young Adults with Disabilities Program
- Acquired Brain Injury Program
- Mental Health Substance Use (MHSU) Tertiary Programs

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The purpose of operating resident comfort funds on behalf of residents is considered to be a direct care service carried out for the sole purpose of the physical and mental well-being of the resident. Residents' comfort funds are monies placed on deposit with Fraser Health to cover personal incidental charges not otherwise covered by Fraser Health. To avoid the risks associated with cash at the bedside, the funds are placed into Fraser Health accounts and all transactions are tracked and recorded by the Fraser Health Treasury department. All payments for incidentals such as hairdressing, podiatry and other activities are paid from the account through the Accounts Payable department. The responsibility for the management of resident's comfort funds lies with the clinical departments.

**3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 3.1 Fraser Health will maintain separate personal non-interest bearing sub-ledger accounts for each resident in order to provide an appropriate audit trail of all transactions.
- 3.2 The Fraser Health Treasury department will maintain a simple bookkeeping system that clearly shows addition, withdrawal and balance for each resident.
- 3.3 Cash transactions will be handled by each facility's site cashier. Where there is no site cashier, the site will operate a petty cash fund to support residents' transactions.
- 3.4 It is the responsibility of each facility's clinical Manager to ensure that each resident's comfort fund balance is maintained with a positive balance. Weekly reports of all residents' account balances will be provided to each facility's clinical Manager.
- 3.5 Monthly statements of transactions will be sent to the resident and/or the resident's family.
- 3.6 The resident and/or the resident's family are expected to keep the account up to date and in a positive balance.
- 3.7 Original receipts must be provided in order to charge transactions.
- 3.8 The resident's comfort fund must be maintained at a level that is consistent with the monthly discretionary spending of the resident. Based on the Provincial policy, the account balance must not exceed \$500.00 at any one time unless approved under special circumstances by the facility's clinical Manager.

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3.9 In cases of conflict among family members, the clinical department must ensure the involved individual(s) do not handle the resident's funds without Fraser Health management supervision.

#### 4.0 **PROCESS**

##### 4.1 Authorization Form

A signed Comfort Fund Authorization Form regarding the operation of the resident's comfort fund will be obtained from each resident or their financially responsible person. The authorization form will indicate whether the resident accepts or declines the service. This form will be held in the resident's file by the site at which the resident resides. The Fraser Health Treasury department will only process transactions when the resident has a signed authorization form on file.

##### 4.2 Transaction Processing

Transactions appropriate to process through the residents' comfort funds include but are not limited to: hairdressing, podiatry, companion services, Handy Dart, cable television and telephone.

Transactions that are not appropriate to process include personal financial transactions outside of the definition of comfort funds, co-insurance payments, supplementary fees, mortgage or bank loan payments and investment transactions.

All deposits and withdrawals will be recorded on a resident by resident basis, in individual resident's comfort accounts. Withdrawals from residents' comfort funds must meet appropriate authorization standards as disclosed in section 4.3 of this policy.

Each facility will provide reasonable access for the resident to funds based on the facility's operational capacity and resident's needs.

Outstanding balances will be refunded within six (6) weeks to the resident if he/she has been discharged or to the resident's estate if the resident has expired.

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#### 4.3 Transaction Approvals

All withdrawals must have the appropriate authorization before funds are removed from the resident's account and requests must be accompanied by a Comfort Fund Expenditure Voucher or an Accounts Payable Cheque Request form.

Cash withdrawals and disbursements must be signed by the resident or financially responsible person. Where residents are unable to sign or disbursements are made on their behalf the transaction must be approved by the unit manager or their designate and verified by a second signature from supporting staff.

Cash withdrawals can only be made by residents deemed to be competent by the facility's clinical department management. The clinical department must maintain an up-to-date list of all competent residents and that list is to be available to all staff that make disbursements from residents' comfort funds.

#### 4.4 Service Providers and Contractors

It is the responsibility of Residential Care management to ensure that all services and products purchased through the resident's comfort fund have in fact been received by the resident.

External service providers under contract or agreement with the Fraser Health and paid a fee to provide services to the residents are prohibited from receiving direct payment from residents.

### 5.0 **DISCRETIONARY RULES**

The purpose of operating resident comfort funds on behalf of residents is considered to be a direct care service carried out for the sole purpose of the physical and mental well-being of the resident. Therefore, operational staff are given some discretion when administering these resident comfort funds. It would not be prudent to deny a resident access to these funds simply on the basis of strict adherence to the rules when it is clear those funds can and will be reimbursed or that the dollar amount is insignificant when compared to the physical or emotional impact to the resident. In such cases clinical department management may use its discretion to temporarily grant the following exceptions to the rules:

- A resident with a solid history of financial stability may be granted a temporary overdraft.

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- For special situations and for a limited time period a resident may carry a balance greater than the maximum allowable comfort fund balance.
- Losses incurred when due diligence has been applied will be written off to corporate expense.
- Losses incurred when due diligence has not been applied will be charged to the cost centre where the resident resides or to the cost centre responsible for the loss.