

ESCORT CEREMONY

(3/30/2011)

PURPOSE:

To provide a method of recognizing and honoring patients after death. For those who are known to have served in a branch of the United States military service, a special veteran ceremony shall be performed.

POLICY:

After death and at the time of transport from the IPU, a cadre of staff and volunteers shall escort the patient and the family to the exit. For Veterans, the patient's remains shall be covered with the U.S. Flag and a flag folding ceremony shall be conducted.

PROCEDURE:

1. When a patient dies on the IPU, staff and volunteers shall assemble outside the patient room when "Honor Escort" is paged. The funeral home directors shall transport the patient remains to the elevators, escorted by family and staff up to that point. Once the elevator doors close, the family will be accompanied back to the room if needed and staff and volunteers shall return to their assigned duties.

Veterans:

1. When a patient is admitted to the IPU, and is known to be a Veteran, s/he shall be identified as such on the white communication board at the nurse's station and on the census sheet. The Volunteer Coordinator –IPU/Comfort Care Liaison will keep the Veteran's Services Department notified of any Veterans who are on the in-patient unit.
2. When a Veteran passes on the IPU, the IPU staff must notify the Stein Hospice Director of Veterans Services, by phone and/or by email. She will then start the process of notifying staff members who have been trained in the ceremony of accompanying the Veterans body as it leaves the floor. An announcement over the telephone intercom will be made "Code Stars and Stripes" to notify all that a Veteran has passed and are ready to be escorted from the unit.
3. A staff will notify the family of the escort and invite them to participate.
4. A flag will be kept in the nursing office in a triangular holder. The flag is to be removed from the holder and respectfully held and carried to deceased Veteran's room and placed at the end of his bed for the funeral home to drape over the body. The flag then is placed on the body in the room by the funeral home. Stars go over the head and to the left side, stripes to the feet.
5. Staff and volunteers wait outside the room for the Veteran to come out on the gurney. Any Veteran or active military member in the group will lead the procession. Chaplains will follow. Behind the gurney will be any family members and behind them, Stein staff and volunteers. Any staff or volunteer member who happens upon the procession should stop and stand at attention, saluting if a Veteran or placing hand to heart if not.

6. The deceased Veteran is escorted to the service elevators at the north end of the hallway of the administrative offices on the third floor.

7. When the procession reaches the elevator, the procession stops. The flag is removed by two people, who may receive the assistance of a third, and it is properly folded. All others either salute if they are a Veteran or slowly raise their hand over their heart and keep that salute or hand in the same place until the flag is completely folded and handed off.

8. At the conclusion of the flag folding ceremony, members of the procession leave quietly when dismissed. Family condolences may be given at that time if appropriate.

A staff or volunteer member of the procession will return the flag to the triangular box in the IPU nursing office.