

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



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## STATE OF MONTANA

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Smudging Policy #080408

**POLICY:** It is the policy of the Quality Assurance Division that Healthcare facilities may provide for a Smudging room in the facility. The policy has been developed to provide guidance for establishing a Smudging room in a health care facility and has been coordinated among the Licensure and Certification requirements as a policy for the state of Montana.

**BACKGROUND:** Smudging is the common name given to the Sacred Smoke Bowl Blessing, a powerful cleansing technique from the Native American tradition. Smudging calls on the spirits of sacred plants to drive away negative energies and put the individual back into a state of balance. It is the psychic equivalent of washing your hands before eating - and is used as an essential preliminary to almost all Native American ceremonies. Smudging is a ritual way to cleanse a person, place or an object of negative energies, spirits or influences. The smudging ceremony involves the burning of special, sacred plants and herbal resins, then, either passing an object through the resulting smoke, or fanning the smoke around a person or place. The spirit of the plant then purifies whatever is being smudged. In Western North America the three plants most frequently used in smudging are sage, cedar and sweetgrass.

### **PROCEDURE:**

1. A floor plan for a "Ceremonial Smudging Room" must be submitted to the Licensure Bureau Construction Consultant for review, comment, and approval; prior to construction or occupancy.
2. The space must be separated by a one hour fire and smoke barrier with a 45 min. door as per the NFPA table 18.3.2.1. The walls around the room must extend to the roof deck above with one hour construction.
3. Installation of an exhaust fan, ducted directly to the outside, with the outside vent at least 25 feet from any air intake. The fan may be extraneous to the normal HVAC system provided for the room and may be independently switched. The fan must be of sufficient size to handle the amount of smoke produced during the

smudging, but at a minimum must be capable of 10 total air changes per hour in the smudging room to establish a negative air flow with respect to the rest of the contiguous spaces in the facility. An air test and balance report must accompany the close-out documents.

4. It is permissible for the facility to cover any room smoke detector(s) during the smudge ceremony. All smoke detectors in the room must be uncovered and returned to service at all other times. A fire alarm system, rate-of-rise heat detector shall be installed in the room as a safety factor for when the smoke detectors are covered during a smudge.
5. A fire extinguisher shall be permanently mounted in the room. The mounting height shall be according to the 1998 Edition of the NFPA 10, 1-6.10.
6. The space must be protected by a fully automatic fire suppression system.
7. The room shall have a phone and a fire alarm pull station installed in proximity to the rooms exit.
8. There must be a hearth in the room made of non combustible construction such as stone, tile or concrete for placing the smudge bowl or vessel. In addition, the bowl or vessel used shall be capable of withstanding the heat of the smudge bundle without sustaining damage.
9. There can be no oxygen in use during the smudge.
10. The room must be directly supervised by facility personnel during a smudging.

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