I. POLICY

It is the policy of UPMC to provide for safe and therapeutic observation of patients according to individual patient needs. UPMC will utilize Care Attendants when necessary to provide observation for patients on inpatient nursing units and in emergency departments, in accordance with established standards to minimize the safety risk to the patient or another individual. This policy outlines the role and responsibilities of the Safety Care Attendant and the Psychiatric Care Attendant.

Links to policies referenced within this policy can be found in Section VI.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all United States based UPMC employees or Contractor employees working in a Care Attendant position capacity within UPMC hospitals.

III. DEFINITIONS:

Safety Care Attendant: Provides patient care, support and constant observation in accordance with established policies and procedures under the direction of the registered nurse, physician, or provider with prescriptive authority. Routinely performs the UPMC patient care core responsibilities for Safety Care Attendants which includes, but is not limited to constant observation, activities of daily living such as hygiene (bath and oral care), bed making, transfer and ambulation assistance, and patient comfort measures.

Psychiatric Care Attendant: Provides constant observation or special constant observation to assigned suicidal or behavioral health patients under the direction of the registered nurse, physician, or provider with prescriptive authority, and will have limited direct care responsibilities so that the patient remains in direct eye sight at all times. As a result, the Psychiatric Care Attendant may not be able to complete other care or ADLs for the patient that would require the Psychiatric Care Attendant to leave the room (such as going into the patient’s bathroom) or turn their back on the patient. Staff functioning in the Psychiatric Care Attendant role will be informed of the reason that the patient requires a Psychiatric Care Attendant by the assigned registered nurse. Psychiatric Care Attendants may be used in non-behavioral health departments and hospitals.
**Constant Observation (CO):** Whereby the staff continuously observes and may interact individually with the patient while staying within view of the patient. Additionally, the patient’s hands must be visible at all times to the CO staff or care attendant. CO must also be completed in the bathroom and when the patient leaves for any medical testing. Patients on CO status may have issues that jeopardize their safety and exhibit behaviors or voice intentions of suicidality or significant aggressive behavior that require staff or a care attendant to be observing them at all times to ensure that they are safe.

**Special Constant Observation (SCO):** Whereby a staff member or care attendant continuously observes the patient within arm’s distance. Additionally, the patient’s hands must be visible at all times to the SCO staff or care attendant. SCO must also be completed in the bathroom and when the patient leaves for any medical testing. Patients on SCO status may have issues that jeopardize their safety and exhibit behaviors or voice intentions of suicidality or significant aggressive behavior that require staff or a care attendant to be observing them at all times to ensure that they are safe. This level of observation is used when it is necessary to have the staff or care attendant close to the patient to prevent the patient from injuring himself or herself.

**IV. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarification of and explanation of the therapeutic levels of observation as well as to provide the minimal requirements and utilization guidelines for providing therapeutic observation to patients by patient care attendants.

**V. PROCEDURE**

**Safety Care Attendant**

1. The use of constant observation by Safety Care Attendants is a nurse driven intervention based on nursing judgment after alternative measures have proven ineffective. A physician’s order is not required to initiate or discontinue a Safety Care Attendant.

2. A request for a Safety Care Attendant may come from a physician, nurse, or family member.
   a. Any physician order for an assessment for a Safety Care Attendant (Sitter), 1:1 constant observation with a non-suicidal or non-behavioral health patient will trigger nursing to assess the need for constant observation provided by a Safety Care Attendant.
   b. Patients or patients’ family requesting a Safety Care Attendant, sitter, or companion can be provided with the vendor list of agencies and/or private individuals that provide the requested service. The private duty companion must complete orientation and any necessary competencies as required by the
individual facility. The fee for these services is the sole responsibility of the family and the patient/family is responsible for payment to the individual or agency providing the service. UPMC assumes no responsibility for collection or distribution of patient/family requested fees.

3. Constant observation or special constant observation is initiated by a registered nurse based on an appropriate assessment of the patient which is corroborated by the Unit Director (or designee) and/or nursing supervisor.

4. A review of the patients requiring constant observation or special constant observation will be completed daily.

5. The need for a Safety Care Attendant should be re-evaluated each shift by the registered nurse assigned to the patient.

Psychiatric Care Attendant

1. The request for a Psychiatric Care Attendant for suicidal or behavioral health patients requires the order of a physician and cannot be discontinued without a physician order. Nurses may initiate constant observation or special constant observation of a patient for the safety of a patient until an order is secured. Discontinuation of a Psychiatric Care Attendant can only be completed with a physician’s order.

2. Constant observation or special constant observation is to be maintained without disruption, and thus, the Psychiatric Care Attendant may have limited duties or care responsibilities so the patient is in direct eye sight at all times.

General Guidelines for Care Attendants

1. Care Attendant resources will be reasonably allocated and prioritized based on overall safety considerations in the following order:

   a. For patients with a positive suicide/homicide screening with or without a civil commitment (302 or above, 201) – a Psychiatric Care Attendant is required and ordered by the provider.

   b. For patients on a Civil commitment (302 or above, 201) who are not Suicidal/Homicidal, a Psychiatric Care Attendant is required and ordered by the provider.

   c. For patients who are not on a civil commitment but who pose a behavioral risk to themselves or others, a Psychiatric Care Attendant is required and should be initiated.
d. For patients who pose a safety risk to themselves or others, a Safety Care Attendant may be assigned based on the outcome of the Patient Safety Assessment Screening and the clinical judgment of the registered nurse.

2. The registered nurse will follow the business unit’s procedure for obtaining the care attendant.

3. UPMC WorkSource will be notified prior to outside agency for supplemental requests.

4. Care Attendant requirements:
   a. Must meet the job requirements and adhere to the UPMC Care Attendant job description.
   b. A professional appearance must be maintained at all time. Refer to Dress Code Policy HS-HR0714 for requirements.
   c. The hospital or agency ID badge must be worn at all times.
   d. Must perform job responsibilities as defined by the Care Attendant job description.
   e. Must be able to initiate a rapid response team in an emergency.
   f. Must practice universal precautions or specified precautions as indicated.
   g. Must have HIPAA/Confidentiality training and adhere to the training requirements.
   h. Must be oriented by each business unit prior to performing Care Attendant duties on the business unit.

5. Patient Care Attendant responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
   a. Ensuring constant observation or special constant observation as defined, providing protection to keep a patient from harming self or others, maintaining the patient’s room in a neat and orderly fashion, and immediately reporting any changes in mental status and/or physical status to the registered nurse caring for the patient.
b. If a nursing assistant, patient care technician (PCT), Advanced PCT, or any other support staff is assuming the responsibilities of the following role:

i. Safety Care Attendant - shall perform all duties as delegated within their scope of practice, defined competency, and hospital policy and procedures.

ii. Psychiatric Care Attendant – other duties assigned may be limited so that support staff maintains the patient in eye sight at all times or maintains the patient within arm’s distance.

The use of radios, headphones, and/or any other electrical device by the Care Attendant for personal use is prohibited. Refer to Personal Electronic Device Usage Policy HS-HR0753.

VI. POLICIES REFERENCED WITHIN THIS POLICY

HS-HR0714 Dress Code

HS-HR0753 Personal Electronic Device Usage

SIGNED: Holly Lorenz, RN MSN
Chief Nursing Executive

ORIGINAL: September 16, 2008

APPROVALS:
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Executive Staff: December 4, 2015

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SPONSOR: Chief Nursing Executive

* With respect to UPMC business units described in the Scope section, this policy is intended to replace individual business unit policies covering the same subject matter. In-Scope business unit policies covering the same subject matter should be pulled from all manuals.