

Policy & Procedure Manual

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## **SCENT SENSITIVE WORKSITES– HR-XI-21**

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### **POLICY:**

OPTIONS NORTHWEST is dedicated to providing healthy, comfortable, and respectful residential living environments for people supported and work environments for employees, that respect the use of scented products and protect individuals who have sensitivity to them. For this reason, scented and fragranced products are not to be worn at OPTIONS NORTHWEST by employees, visitors, guests, and people receiving support who may enter our doors. People receiving support living in residential locations supported by OPTIONS are strongly encouraged to minimize the use of scented products. We urge everyone who enters our doors to be cautious and respectful of our scent sensitive environments.

A scented or fragranced product is any product strong enough to be noticed by others. The chemicals used in scented products can make some people ill, especially those with fragrance sensitivities, allergies or other medical conditions. Scents are included in a very large range of products, as outlined in the Appendix A – “Scented Products”.

Appropriate research on each scent or chemical product used in the workplace shall be completed with due consideration for scent sensitivities.

Worksite locations where there are people working or residing with known sensitivities shall have signs posted at the entrance of the building. Employees, visitors and people receiving support will be informed of this policy. Signage and other promotional materials shall be posted in prominent locations where the information is most likely to come to the attention of all such individuals.

Due to the public accessibility of the Administrative office- this location has been deemed a scent-free work environment.

***NOTE: If your scented products are affecting an employee or person receiving support, OPTIONS NORTHWEST has the right to request removal of all scented products and/or for you to reschedule your attendance.***

**PURPOSE:**

1. To create an awareness of scent sensitivity, which fosters a respectful atmosphere for everyone that works or is involved with OPTIONS NORTHWEST.
2. To provide proactive guidelines to ensure that a healthy, safe, comfortable environment is maintained for all employees and people receiving service.
3. To minimize the potential negative effects of exposure to scented products.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. OPTIONS NORTHWEST employees will encourage people receiving support to be respectful of any identified sensitivity to scented products by explaining the effects of the products on others and providing educational resources, as appropriate.
2. Employees are encouraged to advise their Supervisor/Manager/Director of known sensitivities and to be as specific as possible about related symptoms, what has been done to relieve the symptoms, what works and when the symptoms clear up. Depending on the severity of the sensitivity, the Supervisor/Manager/Director and employee will determine a plan to minimize and/or resolve the concerns, involving the Health and Safety Coordinator, Representative and/or Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, as necessary.

Note: Employees may be required to provide medical documentation/restrictions, regarding their health condition that responds adversely to scents, in order for the employer to address concerns and/or establish reasonable accommodation.

3. As appropriate and where possible, the employee should approach their co-worker(s) in a positive manner and share their concerns about scented products worn or being used in their area that are causing concern. This should include expressing how the product is affecting their health. If approaching the co-worker(s) does not resolve the concern, the employee should communicate with their Supervisor/Manager/Director to explain the situation and how the employee attempted to resolve the issue.
4. Supervisors/Managers/Directors will note the employee's concerns and involve the Health and Safety Coordinator, representative and/or Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee, or other Human Resources Representative, as appropriate. The Supervisor/Director/Manager will then discuss the concerns with the employee(s) and individual(s) working and/or living in the location (as applicable) and explain that health concerns have arisen regarding scented products.

5. Where necessary, the Supervisor/Manager/Director may direct that scented products and/or other allergens will not be used in specific areas. If this is the case, signs will be posted and if necessary, purchasing protocols will be established.
6. Employees or people receiving support who arrange meetings, visits, or other events at any OPTIONS location shall ensure that invitees are provided advance notice of our policy and any location specific environmental scent restrictions.
7. Wherever possible, OPTIONS NORTHWEST will advise employees, with as much advance notice as possible, when activities such as floor waxing, carpet shampooing, painting or other related activities will be conducted so that personnel can make arrangements or have their duties modified at that time, where sensitivities are an issue.
8. Where possible, a statement regarding our scent-free work environment shall appear on email signatures, memos, letters, room booking notices, OPTIONS NORTHWEST website, employment postings, etc.
9. Staff with an OPTIONS NORTHWEST email address shall state that we are a scent-sensitive workplace in their email signature as follows: *OPTIONS NORTHWEST promotes a scent-free environment. We appreciate your cooperation and thank you for respecting our policy when visiting our agency.*
10. Appendix A – “Scented Products” is provided for information purposes. Further specific information can be obtained from the Health and Safety Coordinator.

**RECOMMENDED BY:** Director, Human Resources  
Coordinator, Health & Safety

**APPENDICES:** 1

**OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY:** Administration, Finance, Human Resources, Community Services Administration, Community Services (all)

**ORIGINAL POLICY DATE:** September 2011

**AUTHORIZED BY:** Executive Director

**SIGNATURE:** 



## Scents

Scents can cause serious health problems for people, especially for people with lung diseases like asthma or COPD. Being near a scented product- perfume, scented candles, or even scented laundry detergent- can make some people sick.

### What are some health effects of scented products?

<u>Asthma symptoms</u>	Headaches
Watery or dry eyes	Breathing problems, especially for people with lung diseases
Double vision	Fatigue
Sneezing and nasal congestion	Nausea
Sinusitis	Depression
Ear pain	Muscle and joint pain
Dizziness	High blood pressure
Rashes and hives	Swollen lymph glands
Breathing problems, especially for people with lung diseases	

### What's in fragrances?

The problem with scented products is not so much the smell itself as the chemicals that produce the smell. Today's perfume is not made from flowers but from toxic chemicals. Ninety-five percent of chemicals used in fragrances are synthetic compounds derived from petroleum. They include benzene derivatives, aldehydes and many other known toxics and sensitizers - just one perfume can contain more than 500 chemicals. Another common ingredient in scents is toluene. Toluene triggers asthma attacks and is known to cause asthma in previously healthy people.

The only safe assumption about scented products is that they contain numerous toxic chemicals which constantly vaporize into the air and attach themselves to hair, clothing, and surroundings.

### What kinds of products are scented?

Chemical fragrances are present in many things we use every day:

- Most laundry detergents
- Fabric softeners
- Anti-cling products
- Dishwashing liquids
- Disinfectants
- Soaps and Deodorants
- Shampoos/Hairsprays and other hair products

## **Does "unscented" or "fragrance-free" really mean there is no fragrance?**

No. Even products labelled "unscented" may actually contain toxic fragrances used to mask the smell of certain ingredients. Health Canada has specific rules about how companies can use these words on their labels. According to Health Canada's labeling regulations "fragrance free" or "unscented" means that there have been no fragrances added to the cosmetic product, or that a masking agent has been added in order to hide the scents from the other ingredients in the cosmetic.

### **What you can do about scented products**

Ask yourself if you really need to wear perfume or cologne on a regular basis.

Use scent-free products when available.

Keep your home or office well-ventilated.

Keep detergents and soaps in sealed containers or a cupboard with a door that completely closes. Make sure the room they are stored in is well ventilated.

### **If you chose to wear perfumes:**

Don't keep perfumes or scented products in your bedroom.

Wear a lighter fragrance (or no fragrance at all), during warm weather. Fragrance intensifies with heat.

Make sure you wear a reasonable amount of fragrance. No one more than an arm's length away from you should be able to smell your fragrance.

*Information taken from The Lung Association at [www.lung.ca](http://www.lung.ca)*