DEEP RIVER AND DISTRICT HEALTH

Policy: Code Purple – Hostage Taking	
Original Date: 2019-03-01	**Policy Manual:** Emergency Preparedness
Approved by: ☐ Board of Directors ☐ Chief Executive Officer ☐ Chief Financial Officer ☒ Chief Nursing Executive ☐ Chief Human Resources Officer	

Policy

A Code Purple is a planned response to ensure the safety of all healthcare workers, patients, residents, and visitors at the organization when one or more person is taken by force by another and a police response is required.

A Code Purple will not result in other healthcare workers coming to assist, as it is designed to keep people away from harm. Police will be contacted as soon as a Code Purple is called.

Procedure

Medical Emergency Codes (E.g. Code Blue, Code White) will NOT be called for victims of the assailant until the incident site is secured by Police.

Initiating a Code Purple

Any healthcare worker who encounters a person who is taking another person(s) by force should immediately press a panic alarm (if available) and/or, at the first safe opportunity, page a Code Purple by stating "Code Purple, location" three times overhead. If unable to announce the code, the healthcare worker should delegate a coworker to do so.

It is the responsibility of the Four Seasons Lodge RPN on days or evenings, or night RPN on Medical to contact:
- 9-1-1
- Admin-on-Call.
- If the assailant is in the Four Seasons Lodge, **the in charge Nurse** is responsible to contact 9-1-1 and the Admin-on-Call

The healthcare worker who speaks with police shall provide to the best of their knowledge:
- Location of the assailant(s) (current, and/or last known),
- Type of weapon(s),
- Description of the assailant(s),
- Any comments or demands made by the assailant(s),
- Information on victims and/or hostages including location and whether they are mobile,
- Any additional information that may be relevant,
- Remain on the line, and follow any instructions (stay as quiet as possible).

When a Code Purple is initiated, all employees will make every reasonable effort to protect themselves, patients, residents, visitors, and others in their immediate area, following the procedures set out in this policy.

<u>Healthcare workers taken by assailant(s):</u>

- Remain calm. The first 15-45 minutes of a hostage situation are the most critical,
- Co-operate with the assailant(s) and avoid hostile, argumentative or aggressive behaviour,
- Establish eye contact, do not stare,
- Speak when spoken to but avoid offering advice, suggestions or your opinion,
- Stay away from doors and windows if possible,
- Observe as much information as possible,
- Carefully evaluate any escape attempt. Attempt only if success is absolutely certain.

<u>Healthcare workers in the immediate area of the assailant(s):</u>

DO NOT attempt to engage the assailant(s), this includes verbal and physical attempts to deescalate the situation.

- Remain calm and hide
    - Do not confront the assailant(s),
    - Do not attempt to remove wounded persons from the scene,
    - If possible, assist others to hide in a safe location and wait for police to arrive,
    - If possible, close doors to patient care areas and instruct patients that are able to hide,
    - Leave any belongings behind,
    - Silence your cell phone and turn off any sources of noise (e.g. radios, televisions, etc.),
    - Hide behind large objects (e.g. cabinets, desks, walls, etc.),
    - Remain quiet and low to the ground,
    - Hide in place until "Code Purple, All Clear" is announced overhead.

- Survive
    - Fight only as a last resort and only if your life is in imminent danger.
    - If necessary, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the assailant by:
        - Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her
        - Throw items and improvising weapons
        - Yelling
        - If others are available, work together to distract and attack the assailant as fiercely as possible.

<u>Healthcare workers in the area NEAR the assailant:</u>

- Remain calm
- Protect yourself and individuals in your area by quickly and quietly:
    - Closing doors, locking and barricading yourself and others inside (where possible)
    - Positioning people out of sight and behind large items that offer protection. (e.g. behind desks, cabinets, and away from windows)
    - Silencing personal alarms, mobile phones and other electronic devices (e.g. TVs, Radios, etc.)
    - Turning off monitors and screens (where possible) to reduce backlighting
    - Instructing others, who are capable of assisting, to do the same with other patient rooms (i.e. visitors may assist with the patient room they are visiting)
- Hide in place until "Code Purple, All Clear" is announced overhead

- If the assailant enters your work area, contact 9-1-1, if it is safe to do so.

Upon Arrival of Police

- Law enforcement personnel are the primary responders and will assume control in any Code Purple response.
- Do not interfere with the Police Officers by delaying or impeding their movements. The Police are there to stop the threat as soon as possible. Officers will proceed directly to the area the assailant was last seen or heard. The first officers at the scene will not stop to assist injured individuals.
- Police Officers will be responding with the intent to use a required level of force to diffuse the situation. Ensure you do not present yourself as a threat to them:
  - Drop any items in your hands (e.g. bags, jackets, etc.)
  - Immediately raise hands and keep them visible at all times
  - Remain calm and follow Officers' instructions; avoid screaming and/or yelling
  - Avoid making quick movements toward Officers
  - Do not attempt to grab hold of an Officer
  - Do not stop to ask Officers for help or direction when evacuating: Proceed in the direction from which Officers are entering the area.
- Police Officers may:
  - Be wearing normal uniforms or tactical gear, helmets, etc.
  - Be armed with rifles, shotguns and/or handguns
  - Use chemical irritants or incapacitating devices (e.g. pepper spray, stun grenades, tasers, etc.) to control the situation
  - Shout commands and may push individuals to the ground for their safety.

Rescue teams comprised of additional Officers and emergency medical personnel may follow the initial Officers when it is safe to do so. These rescue teams will treat and remove any injured persons. They may also call upon able-bodied individuals to assist in removing the wounded from the area.
Once you have reached a safe location you will likely be held in that area by Police until the situation is under control and all witnesses have been identified and questioned. Do not leave the safe location until Police have instructed you to do so.

Recovery

- Police will advise the Incident Commander (or designate) when it is safe to end the Code Purple.
- Once the Police have said it is safe to do so, the Incident Commander will direct the announcement of *"Code Purple, All Clear"* overhead three times.
- The Incident Commander will work with the Police to identify any secure areas. If work is unable to resume in any areas, leadership shall assess needs and develop plans to divert care or transfer patients/residents to other facilities, as applicable
- The Incident Management Team will coordinate a debriefing with staff. Debriefing may include participation of other stakeholders including law enforcement.
- As part of the recovery process, the physical and mental health needs of all workers, patients and residents will be considered. Support will be provided, utilizing existing and additional identified programs (e.g. Employee and Family Assistance Program, individual and group counselling, and worker's compensation, as necessary.)

Materials and Supplies

- **Appendix A:** Incident Commander Code Purple Log
- Debriefing Worksheet for Emergency Codes

<u>Quality Assurance</u>

- Evaluation:
    - The policy will be reviewed and updated at least annually.

- Education:
    - Education will be provided to all staff regarding emergency code upon hire and as per the *Emergency Code Testing Policy* found on Policy Medical.

Reference Documents	Ontario Hospital Association Emergency Management Toolkit: Person with a Weapon. [On-line].
Acknowledgements	• Code Purple: Hostage taking, Pembroke Regional Hospital • Code Purple – Internal Hostage Situation: Hamilton Health Services
Review Process	• Emergency Preparedness Committee – July 3, 2025 • Joint Health and Safety Committee –
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Version approved for printing by Chief Executive Officer.

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Signature

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Date of printed approval: