



**October 13, 2022**

### **A New Resource for Responding to Racist Patient and Visitor Behavior**

Last year, Mount Sinai instituted a [policy for employees](#) for how to interact with patients and visitors who exhibit racist behavior. Today, we're writing to share a new, even easier-to-access resource to help everyone have the policy on hand if it's needed: a printed pocket card outlining the policy and how to put it into action.

For this week's *Bulletin*, we spoke to some of the members of the Nurses Against Racism Employee Resource Group and Solidarity in Action, a subgroup of Mount Sinai Morningside's Shoulder to Shoulder Task Force to support anti-racist policies and practices, who came up with this innovative way to help distribute this critical policy.



**Irem Khan**, Associate Director, Clinical Operations and Special Projects at Mount Sinai Morningside, told us that the team's goal was to make this policy actionable and readily available. "Our focus was on specific actions and responses for tough interactions. We wanted to make this information as easily accessible as possible, so that in the inevitable event that a patient or family member is exhibiting racist behavior, our colleagues would have the tools to handle the situation right at their fingertips."

## Conversations with a Patient, Family Member, or Visitor

Mount Sinai does not tolerate racist, biased, or discriminatory behavior toward staff members, learners or trainees. You are not alone. First evaluate and meet any urgent medical needs. Then report the behavior to your supervisor. Suggested messaging to patients is below.

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| <p><b>Patient, family member, or visitor makes a discriminatory comment or uses profanity or abusive language toward a staff member or learner/trainee.</b></p> <p>A. "Please do not use that type of language as it is offensive to others and not acceptable at Mount Sinai Health Systems."</p> <p>B. "At Mount Sinai, we have a no tolerance policy for inappropriate or offensive behavior or comments. Please refrain from making such remarks."</p> <p>C. "We are committed to providing the very best care to all. Your behavior is preventing us from providing this care. We ask that you please stop (describe the behavior) so that we may help you to the best of our ability."</p> <p>D. "Your comments have no place in this hospital. Our staff are well-trained and very capable of providing high-quality care, all are professionals and we expect that you will treat them with respect."</p> <p>E. "You will be cared for by another clinician. Your current clinician is no longer comfortable treating you based on your offensive behavior/comments."</p> | <p><b>Patient or family member asks to change staff assignments based on the perceived identity of the provider. Such requests will not be honored, except in rare cases determined by the care team or Nurse Administration.</b></p> <p>A. "Our policy is to staff our hospitals with care providers without bias or discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, disability or any other bias. Our staff/learners/trainees are well-trained and extremely competent."</p> <p>B. "We will not make staff changes based on your request, which we perceive as discriminatory. We treat all of our patients, staff, and learners/trainees with respect, and we expect the same from our patients."</p> <p>C. "Your request has been denied. You will continue to be cared for by (provider's name). All of our staff are well-trained in providing the highest quality of care."</p> <p>D. "Based on your behavior and/or discriminatory comments, we specifically denied your staff change. However, we will assign you a new clinician because your current clinician is no longer comfortable providing you treatment."</p> | <p><b>Patient or family member asks to change rooms based on the perceived identity of the roommate or visitors. Such requests will not be honored, except in rare cases determined by the care team or Nurse Administration.</b></p> <p>A. "Our policy is to provide safe and appropriate room assignments to all patients regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability or any other bias."</p> <p>B. "We do not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or disability when making room assignments. Your request has been denied."</p> <p>C. "We do not make room assignments that discriminate based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation, but we will have to change your room if your behavior toward your roommate concerning one of these personal characteristics makes them uncomfortable."</p> |
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## Conversations with a Staff Member

Everyone at Mount Sinai is entitled to safety, courtesy and respect. Use the prompts below to have a conversation with a staff member who has been targeted by a patient, family member, or visitor who is displaying racist, biased, or discriminatory behavior.

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| <p><b>Patient makes a discriminatory comment or uses profanity or abusive language toward one or more staff members. Remember to always check in with the targeted staff or learner.</b></p> <p>A. "I am so sorry this happened to you. Would you like to tell me more about it? What do you need to feel safe here?"</p> <p>B. "It upsets me that this happened to you. I want you to know that you have the right to refuse to care for this patient. We want to make sure that you feel supported and have the agency to make this decision for yourself."</p> <p>C. "You are completely entitled to express your feelings. I support your decision to continue to work with this patient, or to have them reassigned."</p> | <p><b>Patient or patient's family member asks to change a staff assignment based on the perceived race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation of the care provider. Such requests will not be honored, except in rare cases determined by the care team or Nurse Administration.</b></p> <p>A. "I am so sorry this happened to you. At the Mount Sinai Health System, our policy is not to honor any requests that are of a discriminatory, racist, or biased nature, and it is my responsibility to support you."</p> <p>B. "You are entitled to request an assignment change. Your fellow staff members and I are here to support you. However, you may also choose to remain on this assignment. The choice is yours."</p> <p>C. "I understand you want to continue working with this patient. Would it be helpful if I joined you in addressing this patient in an educational manner to defuse the situation?"</p> | <p><b>Patient or patient's family member asks to change room assignment based on the perceived identity of the roommate or their visitors. Such requests will not be honored, except in rare cases determined by the care team or Nurse Administration.</b></p> <p>A. "Would it be helpful if I joined you in working to address this issue with this patient in an educational way?"</p> <p>B. "You have the authority to tell the patient that their request is denied. If you require additional support, please let me know."</p> <p>C. "We do not make room assignments that discriminate based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation."</p> <p>D. "The patient is being inappropriate, and we do not indulge this behavior. However, I can help you find a new room for this patient if their roommate feels uncomfortable with their behavior."</p> |
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This document is meant to be printed. Order copies of the pocket guide on the [brand center](#) or visit [Mount Sinai Daily](#) to view the content more closely.

While Irem worked on what this resource would look like, the co-chair of Nurses Against Racism, **Marsha Sinanan-Vasishta**, MSN, MBA, RN NEA-BC, CPXP, Vice President for Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer at Mount Sinai Morningside, worked on what the pocket guide would say. As with many of the Road Map initiatives, this project has been a collaboration from the start, with Marsha working with colleagues across the system—including in the Office for Diversity and Inclusion, Legal, Talent Development and Learning, Patient Experience, and Marketing and Communications—to get the language just right.



“We realized that we couldn’t just take the language from the policy and put it directly into this guide,” Marsha told us. “It was important for us to get input from other departments and stakeholders to ensure that the information shared in the pocket guide was easily digestible and on message.”

Irem added that the goal was to take an existing resource and make sure it could be available when someone needed it. “This initiative has been a year in the making, and we feel really good about the final product as both a way to help support the policy and share it with a wider audience, and also as reassurance for employees to know that they have the support of the organization behind them to help respond to racist behaviors.”

Pocket Guides are now available in the Brand Center, and we encourage all department leads to place an order for their staff using this [link](#). Additionally, we have uploaded a version of the pocket guide to [Mount Sinai Daily](#) and tagged it as an easy-to-find resource. You can find it [here](#). We also encourage anyone who has feedback on this resource to share your thoughts with us at [RoadMap@mountsinai.org](mailto:RoadMap@mountsinai.org).

As a reminder, there is also a Talent Development and Learning course titled ***Responding to Racist and Discriminatory Patient Behaviors for Managers*** that helps managers practice the skills necessary to address racist or discriminatory behavior by patients and visitors and gain insight into how to best support staff members who are witnesses or targets.

We also hope you’ll consider joining us for some of the following events this week.

All the best,

Angela and Shawn

## Join Us for an Upcoming Event

**Using Adaptive Dance and Exercise to Improve Outcomes in People With Brain Injury**—Join this event on Tuesday, October 18, from 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm.  
[Register here.](#)

**Fostering Health Equity for People With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**—Join this event on Wednesday, October 19, from 1 pm - 2 pm.  
[Register here.](#)

**More events for [Disability Awareness Month](#) can be found by logging into Mount Sinai Daily.**

### **Chats for Change: Deeper Dive Series | White Supremacy Culture**

**Characteristics: Progress Is More**—Chats for Change is a production of Icahn Mount Sinai's Racism and Bias Initiative. Is the goal to always be/do/get more and be/do/get bigger? When we believe "progress is more," we value those who have "progressed" over those who "have not"—whether progress is measured in degrees, grades, money, power, status, or material belongings. Join Leona Hess, PhD, and Alia Barnes, MPH, on Tuesday, October 25, from 12-1 pm as they take a deep dive into how "progress is more" shows up in our work and learning environment and what we can do to counter this white supremacy culture characteristic. Register [here](#).

[Road Map for Action](#)

[Past Bulletins](#)

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