

## **WEST LIBERTY UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF DENTAL HYGIENE BLOODBORNE INFECTIOUS DISEASE POLICY**

The Dental Hygiene Program at West Liberty University is dedicated to providing preventive dental hygiene care of the highest quality. The faculty, staff, and students who work at the West Liberty University Dental Hygiene Program are guided by ethical principles that obligate healthcare professionals to be of benefit, to do no harm, and to respect each person's autonomy, privacy, and confidentiality. The healthcare environment has always presented a risk of injury or illness to patients and professionals due to dental care. For this reason, the Dental Hygiene Program adheres to strict infection control guidelines as recommended by the ADA, CDC, and OSHA, and has established policies for treating patients with bloodborne infectious diseases. According to the NIOSH, the most common bloodborne pathogens dental hygienists are exposed to are human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B virus (HBV), and hepatitis C virus (HCV).

### **Department of Dental Hygiene Faculty, Staff, and Student Responsibilities for Treating Patients with Bloodborne Infectious Diseases**

1. Dental Hygiene faculty, staff, and students have the responsibility to treat patients with bloodborne infectious diseases compassionately and humanely.
2. Dental Hygiene faculty, staff, and students who engage in patient contact may not ethically or legally refuse to treat a patient whose condition is within the realm of competence solely because the patient has a bloodborne infectious disease.
3. Dental Hygiene faculty, staff, and students who engage in patient contact are ethically and legally obligated to respect the rights of privacy and of confidentiality of patients with bloodborne infectious diseases as required by the laws of West Virginia.
4. Dental Hygiene faculty, staff, and students with medical conditions (for example, impaired immune system or exudative skin lesions) that place them at high risk of acquiring infections, and feel that assigned clinical responsibilities for treating patients with bloodborne infectious diseases pose a significant health risk to them, should consult their physician (students may consult the physician at the University Health Service). If the consulted physician agrees that a substantial health risk exists, the faculty, staff, or student must notify the Department of Dental Hygiene Chair in writing. In the event of a difference of opinion regarding health risk, the Provost of the University shall be the final judge.
5. All who engage in patient contact shall follow OSHA bloodborne pathogens and needlestick prevention guidelines and CDC infection control guidelines in all patient care to minimize the risk of transmission of bloodborne infectious diseases. The Dental Hygiene Program shall make available essential supplies and equipment to allow compliance with CDC Standard Precautions.

### **Responsibilities of Department of Dental Hygiene Faculty, Staff, and Students with Bloodborne Infectious Diseases**

Dental Hygiene Program faculty, staff, and students engaged in patient care who know that they are positive for a bloodborne infectious disease, have an ethical, professional, and legal obligation to disclose their disease status to an expert review panel. An expert review panel of the Department Chair, University Medical Director, Ohio County Health Department Director,

and West Virginia Board of Dentistry Representative will be consulted as to procedures to be followed and if a look-back period and patient notification is necessary.

### **Department of Dental Hygiene Faculty, Staff, and Students Needle Stick or other Injuries by Sharp Instruments to Mucous Membranes**

1. Dental Hygiene Program faculty, staff, and students who are penetrated by a needle or other sharp instrument or who have their mucous membranes exposed to aerosols or splatter from blood or body fluids from patients shall wash the affected area with soap and water and report the injury promptly.
2. The completion of an Exposure/Incident Report is mandatory. Exposure/Incident Report forms are kept in the clinic and in the Department Chair's office.
3. Upon completion of the Exposure/Incident Report, the exposed person and identified source will be referred to either the University Health Services during normal business hours or to Doctor's Urgent Care after 3:00 PM. Failure to report to the referred Health Service may result in disciplinary action. West Liberty University's Procedure 29 outlines additional information regarding exposure incidents <https://westliberty.edu/human-resources/university-policy-procedure/procedure-no-29-job-related-injuries-injured-employees/>.

### **Responsibility of West Liberty University Department of Dental Hygiene to Faculty, Staff, and Students with Bloodborne Infectious Diseases**

The Dental Hygiene Program has a commitment to confidentiality, protection against unlawful discrimination, and reasonable accommodation for its faculty, staff, and students in accordance with applicable state and federal law. The expert review panel will be consulted as to procedures to be followed and if a look-back period and patient notification is necessary. This panel shall make recommendations as quickly as possible.

### **Department of Dental Hygiene Faculty, Staff, and Students Bloodborne Infectious Disease Testing**

Routine serologic testing for bloodborne infectious diseases is not required. Those individuals who wish to be routinely tested can do so through their personal physician or alternative setting. If breaks in infection control technique result in exposure to a patient's blood, the professional should undergo HIV/HBV/HCV testing, and if the test is positive report his/her condition to the Department of Dental Hygiene Chair who shall consult the expert review panel (as stated above).

### **Department of Dental Hygiene Immunization Recommendations**

West Liberty University requires all new and transfer students to provide proof of immunity to Measles, Mumps, and Rubella four weeks prior to the start of classes. Students who have medical or religious reasons prohibiting the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella vaccination are required to complete an immunization waiver found on the WLU Student Health Services webpage.

The Hepatitis B vaccine has the potential to eliminate the risk of acquiring hepatitis B by susceptible dental personnel as well as prevent secondary transmission to family and patients by dental personnel who may be in the clinical or carrier state of the disease. Dental Hygiene faculty, staff, and students are required to show proof of immunity or begin the vaccine series prior to or immediately after beginning the first semester of the Program. Faculty, staff, and

students may be exempted from proof of immunity or the requirement to receive vaccines, due to medical or religious reasons. To be exempted from immunization or proof of immunity, a declination form must be completed and retained in student or employment records.

It is recommended an influenza vaccine be completed annually throughout the student's program of study.