

Clothing and Personal Appearance

OBJECTIVES / RATIONALE

Many factors contribute to providing quality client health care. Nonverbal messages, such as presenting a pleasing appearance in terms of clothing and body adornments, influence how clients perceive a health care professional. The student is expected to demonstrate advanced communication skills to provide quality patient care.

TEKS 121.5 (c) 2B

TAKS ELA 1, 4, 5, 6
Social Studies 3

KEY POINTS

- I. Clothing and body adornments communicate information to others such as position, personality, and relationships. In health care, building a relationship of trust between the client and health care professional is a vital factor in providing quality health care. Therefore, the health care professional must be aware of the nonverbal messages being sent by clothing and appearance and how these factors influence client's perception of the health care professional.
- II. Clients form judgments, beginning with initial contact with the health care professional. When a client sees a health care professional for the first time, their initial impression is based on appearance:
 - A. grooming and hygiene
 - B. posture
 - C. facial expressions
 - D. handshake
 - E. verbal greetings
 - F. personal adornments
 - G. clothing
- III. It is possible to "choose" the image portrayed to clients by being aware of nonverbal cues sent by appearance and dress. The impression created by these cues reflects the quality of care clients expect to receive. The initial interaction lays the foundation for the client - health care professional relationship.
- IV. Most health care professionals wear some type of uniform. Uniforms may include dresses, suits, smocks, jackets, lab coats, or scrubs. Professional attire should be neat and clean. Clients *expect* the health care professional to maintain a high standard of cleanliness; therefore washable fabrics are best. To present a professional appearance and inspire confidence, clothing should fit properly and be in good repair (free from tears, missing buttons, broken zippers, uneven hemlines) Ill-fitting clothing does not look professional and is uncomfortable. Shoes should be neat, clean, and comfortable.
- V. Jewelry and personal adornments are not permitted because of the possibility of causing injury to the patient and transmitting pathogens.
- VI. Common impressions created by appearance and dress cues:
 - A. dirty or clothing in poor repair = unreliable and unprofessional

- B. body piercing, tattoos = unprofessional, unreliable, immature, dangerous
 - C. clean, neat, clothing in good repair = professional, reliable
- VII. It is important for the health care professional to know and follow rules and standards of attire established by the facility in which they will be working.

ACTIVITY

- I. Conduct the following experiment:
 - a. Dress in “Sunday Best” all day for 2-3 days. Take anecdotal notes, recording relevant verbal and nonverbal messages and analyze different reactions.
 - b. Share your observations with the class.
- II. Research the history of clothing worn by health care professionals in an occupation of choice. Make observations as to what signals the clothing sent to clients and why the signals were important to the client - health professional relationship.
- III. Maintain a log of observations made at a work-based learning site for two weeks. Include entries concerning the appearance and clothing of health care professionals, what nonverbal cues are being communicated, and how clients respond to them.
- IV. Analyze all data collected, draw conclusions, and create a multimedia presentation of findings to share with the class.

ASSESSMENT

Multimedia Presentation Rubric

ACCOMODATIONS

For reinforcement, the student will create a visual diagram of the characteristics of professional clothing for health care careers.

For enrichment, the student will design a “uniform” for health care professionals in the future (i.e. 2025, 2075, 2100) and describe what nonverbal cues may be sent by various characteristics of the uniform.

REFLECTIONS
