

Kids Health First® / Client Brief

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Topic: Chaperones

Reminder: The Georgia Composite Medical Board (the “Board”) changed the chaperone rule (the “Chaperone Rule”) several years ago. Previously, the Chaperone Rule only required a physician or physician assistant to have a chaperone present when examining the breast and/or genitalia of a patient *of the opposite sex*. The Board amended the prior Chaperone Rule to the following:

“Unprofessional Conduct” includes...

“Conducting a physical examination of the breast and/or genitalia without a chaperone present, unless the patient or the patient's parent or guardian specifically requests that a chaperone not be present for this portion of the clinical encounter which shall be documented in the patient's medical record. Physicians at their discretion may refuse to conduct an examination of the breast and/or genitalia without a chaperone present.” **Rule 360-3-.02 (12).**

For all other examinations the Board recommends that physicians make a positive effort to secure a comfortable and considerate atmosphere for the patient, such as: (i) the provision of appropriate gowns; (ii) private facilities for undressing; (iii) sensitive use of draping; and (iv) clear explanations on various components of the physical examination.

Also, the “physician *should have a policy* that patients are free to make a request for a chaperone. This **policy** should be communicated to patients, either by means of a well-displayed notice or preferably through a conversation initiated by the intake nurse or the physician. The request by a patient to have a chaperone should be honored. It is recommended that an authorized health professional should serve as a chaperone whenever possible. In their practices, physicians should establish clear expectations about respecting patient privacy and confidentiality to which chaperones must adhere. If a chaperone is to be provided, a separate opportunity for private conversation between the patient and the physician should be allowed.”¹ [Emphasis added]

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¹ Georgia Composite Medical Board, *Guidelines Concerning the Use of Chaperones During Physical Examinations*

