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13 CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

14 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

15 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

16 CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN
17 FRANCISCO,

18 Plaintiff,

19 vs.

20 ALEX M. AZAR II, Secretary of U.S.
21 Department of Health and Human Services;
22 ROGER SEVERINO, Director, Office for
23 Civil Rights, Department of Health and Human
24 Services; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
25 AND HUMAN SERVICES; and DOES 1-25,

26 Defendants.

Case No. 3:19-cv-2405-JCS

**DECLARATION OF DR. ALICE CHEN IN
SUPPORT OF CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN
FRANCISCO'S MOTION FOR
PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**

Hearing Date: July 12, 2019

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Judge: Hon. Joseph C. Spero

Place: Courtroom G, 15th Floor

Trial Date: Not set

1 I, Dr. Alice Chen, declare as follows:

2 1. I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth in this declaration and, if called as a
3 witness, could and would testify competently to the matters set forth below.

4 2. I am the Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Director for the San Francisco Health
5 Network ("SFHN"), a branch of the San Francisco Public Health Department. I have served in this
6 role since 2015.

7 3. Prior to assuming this role, starting in 2005, I served as Medical Director of the General
8 Medicine Clinic, Medical Director of the Adult Medical Center, Director of the eReferral Program,
9 Director of the Center for Innovation in Access and Quality, and Chief Integration Officer for San
10 Francisco General Hospital.

11 4. I attended Yale University, Stanford University Medical School, and the Harvard
12 School of Public Health.

13 5. SFHN runs a full scope health care delivery system that includes primary and
14 preventive care, specialty care, mental health and substance use disorder services, jail health services,
15 maternal child adolescent health services, urgent care, emergency department services, psychiatric
16 emergency room services, level one trauma center services and long term care.

17 6. SPDPH recognizes and respects that an individual's religious beliefs, cultural values,
18 and ethics may make that person reluctant to participate in an aspect of patient care. However, it
19 would be an untenable situation if staff could categorically refuse to participate in patient care based
20 on an objection to the service the patient seeks or needs.

21 7. In order to support the legitimate conscience rights of individual health care
22 professionals while meeting fundamental obligations of the medical profession and the right of
23 patients to receive timely, quality patient care, we developed a policy concerning "requests not to
24 participate in an aspect of patient care."

25 8. Administrative Policy 5.15 states:

26 In the event that a staff member feels reluctant to participate in an aspect of
27 patient care because the patient's condition, treatment plan, or physician's
28 orders are in conflict with the staff member's religious beliefs, cultural values or
ethics, the staff member's written request for accommodation will be considered
if the request does not negatively affect the quality of patient's care.

1 In situations where the immediate nature of the patient's needs do not allow for
2 the substitution of personnel, the patient's right to receive the necessary quality
3 patient care will take precedence over the staff member's individual beliefs and
4 rights until other competent personnel can be provided.

5 9. The Policy explains that "[a]n accommodation may include personnel substitutions
6 through a change in patient assignment or transfer of the staff member to a different patient care area
7 in accordance with organizational standards." It is also clear in the Policy that the individual's
8 "manager and/or supervisor must determine if the staff member's request for accommodation
9 negatively affects the quality of the patient's care," and "[i]f the patient's needs do not allow for the
10 substitution of personnel, the manager and/or supervisor must inform the staff member to stay at their
11 post until other competent personnel can be provided."

12 10. A true and correct copy of Administrative Policy 5.15 is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

13 11. This policy has enabled us to appropriately balance the important interests at stake.

14 12. If we are required to alter this policy to provide for a categorical right to refuse to
15 participate in an aspect of patient care—even in urgent situations when other personnel is not
16 immediately available to step in—patient care will be significantly compromised.

17 13. If we are required to alter this policy to prohibit the involuntary transfer of individuals
18 who have a religious or moral objection to performing critical aspects of their job, it will impede the
19 ability of our hospitals and clinics to function efficiently.

20 I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct and that this declaration
21 was executed on June 3, at San Francisco, California.

22 

23 Alice Chen, M.D., M.P.H.

EXHIBIT A

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Administrative Policy Number: 5.15

TITLE: REQUESTS NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ASPECT OF PATIENT CARE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for processing staff member's requests not to participate in patient care in a manner which ensures continuity of quality patient care.

STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the policy of San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center to respect the diversity of its staff and patients and the right of patients to receive quality patient care. In the event that a staff member feels reluctant to participate in an aspect of patient care because the patient's condition, treatment plan, or physician's orders are in conflict with the staff member's religious beliefs, cultural values or ethics, the staff member's written request for accommodation will be considered if the request does not negatively affect the quality of patient's care.

In situations where the immediate nature of the patient's needs do not allow for the substitution of personnel, the patient's right to receive the necessary quality patient care will take precedence over the staff member's individual beliefs and rights until other competent personnel can be provided.

All managers and supervisors are responsible for informing employees of this policy and changes in departmental scope of practice. Managers and supervisors are also responsible for implementing this policy as appropriate.

PROCEDURE

I. Staff Notification

At the time of employment, the manager and/or supervisor must review the departmental scope of service with new staff **member** as outlined in the Record of Orientation. The employee signs the Record of Orientation which is forwarded to Human Resources Services by the manager or supervisor for inclusion in the employee's personnel file.

II. Requests not to Participate in an Aspect of Care

- A. It is recognized that staff may have certain ethical and religious beliefs or cultural values and, in good conscience, may feel compelled to request not to participate in an aspect of patient care and requests an accommodation.
 - An accommodation may include personnel substitutions through a change in patient assignment or transfer of the staff member to a different patient care area in accordance with organizational standards.
- B. The manager and/or supervisor must determine if the staff member's request for accommodation negatively affects the quality of the patient's care. If the patient's needs do not allow for the substitution of personnel, the manager and/or supervisor must inform the staff member to stay at their post until other competent personnel can be provided.

APPENDIX

None

CROSS REFERENCES

SFGHMC Administrative Policies and Procedures:
[3.07 Competency Assessment and Improvement Plan](#)
[16.04 Patient Rights and Responsibilities](#)

Staff Nurses and Per Diem Nurses Memorandum of Understanding between Service Employees International Union and the City and County Of San Francisco - July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2016, Section 40 Article II.K. Conscientious Objector

Supervising Nurses Memorandum of Understanding between Teamster Local 856 and the City and County of San Francisco - July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2016, Section 30 – H. Conscientious Objection to Areas of Moral and Religious Concerns

APPROVAL

Nursing Executive and Patient Care Services Committee	6/2/15
Medical Executive Committee	6/18/15
Quality Council	6/16/15
Exec Committees B-25 Readiness	12/17/15

Date Adopted: 09/95

Reviewed: 04/99, 2/05, 06/07, 02/08, 03/11, 4/15

Revised: 12/2001

[\[GO TO TOP\]](#)