

# “THIS IS JUST HOW WE DO IT HERE.”

When office policy collides with your clinical judgment

Every office needs systems. The problem begins when an operational preference quietly decides what is clinically adequate for every patient.



# THE SENTENCE THAT SHOULD GET YOUR ATTENTION: “THAT IS JUST HOW WE DO IT HERE.”

Policies can create consistency, protect time, and help a team work together. They can also be used to normalize a clinical limitation nobody wants to examine.

You may be told not to retake an image that does not answer the clinical question, to proceed without records you believe you need, or to limit documentation because the schedule is behind.

**A policy can organize care. It cannot replace your judgment.**

## WHAT THIS RESOURCE WILL NOT DO

It will not give you a complete clinical, legal, or workplace protocol. It will help you recognize the decision in front of you, identify the information or support that is missing, and choose a safer next step without pretending certainty.

# NOT EVERY DISAGREEMENT MEANS THE OFFICE IS UNSAFE

Sometimes you are seeing a reasonable workflow you have not learned yet. Sometimes the policy truly creates a clinical limitation. Identify which one you are dealing with.

1

## THE PURPOSE

What is the policy trying to accomplish—and is the purpose operational or clinical?

2

## THE LIMIT

What information, time, record, or treatment decision does it change in this specific case?

3

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Can you still meet the professional responsibility attached to the decision?

4

## YOUR REASONING

If the outcome were questioned later, could you explain what you relied on and why you proceeded?

5

## THE PATTERN

Is this an isolated misunderstanding, or a repeated expectation to ignore the same concern?

# IN THE MOMENT

Address the limitation—not the character of the people involved.

- ☐ Name the specific clinical limitation neutrally.

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- ☐ State what you need before you can proceed responsibly.

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- ☐ Avoid staging the disagreement in front of the patient unless immediate safety requires action.

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- ☐ Document the relevant limitation, what you did about it, and the next step.

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- ☐ If the pattern repeats, raise it through the correct channel instead of renegotiating the same conflict chairside.

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- ☐ Notice the response: can the system discuss a clinical concern without punishing the person who raised it?

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# YOU CAN RESPECT THE OFFICE WITHOUT HANDING IT YOUR JUDGMENT

1

## BE SPECIFIC

Identify the exact limitation instead of condemning the entire office.

2

## BE CALM

Pressure and defensiveness do not make the clinical question clearer.

3

## BE ACCOUNTABLE

Do not let familiarity turn a limitation into a standard you are expected to own.

**A policy can organize care. It cannot replace your judgment.**

A short guide can give you language and a place to start. It cannot see your schedule, hear your conversations, or weigh the trade-offs in your position. Without context, even good advice stays generic.

For a deeper dive, explore the New DDS Unfiltered Digital Library or work directly with Dr. K.

[NewDDSUnfiltered.com](https://NewDDSUnfiltered.com)

Professional note: This guide does not provide legal advice or define a standard of care. Apply patient-specific judgment and all relevant professional, regulatory, and workplace requirements.