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DATE: June 7, 2021
TO: Hospitals
FROM: New York State Department of Health

Interim Health Advisory:
Updated COVID-19 Updated Guidance for Hospital Visitation and Non-Hospital Employed Patient Support

Background

The purpose of this guidance is to update hospitals on visitation policy requirements. In response to the reduced prevalence of COVID-19 in New York State, hospitals must have visitation policies for patients that allow and encourage visitors and patient support persons to spend appropriate amounts of time with patients. This document supersedes all previous guidance documents on hospital visitation during COVID-19.

Please be reminded that Section 405.7(c)(20) of Title 10 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York (NYCRR) requires hospitals to authorize each patient's family members and other persons over the age of 12 years to visit the patient as consistent with the hospital's capability to receive visitors. To the extent possible, given the patient's health and safety, that of other patients, and hospital operational needs, the hospital must allow at least one individual providing support to the patient, including but not limited to partner, parent, guardian, other family members, friends or non-hospital employed patient support persons such as doula or clergy, to remain with the patient. These visits are essential and contribute to patients' physical and emotional well-being and care and must be allowed to the maximum extent possible. Visitation must, however, be accompanied by strict adherence to infection prevention and control requirements.

Hospital Visitation Guidance

Effective immediately, hospitals must allow in-person visitation consistent with this guidance. Hospitals may, in their discretion and consistent with their pre-COVID-19 ability, set the maximum number of visitation hours and visitors for various units in the hospital based on the patient's status, condition, circumstances. However, hospitals must ensure, at a minimum, that for Labor and Delivery, two support persons, including a doula if requested, may accompany the patient throughout labor, delivery, and the postpartum period, including recovery, until discharge to home. The support persons can be the patient's spouse, partner, sibling, parent, or other persons of their choice. Additionally, pediatric patients may

have two designated support persons with them at all times and these individuals may rotate; patients with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) and patients with cognitive impairments including dementia, may designate one support person to remain with them through their hospitalization, and an additional visitor may also be with the patient during hospital-designated visiting hours; two support persons may be designated to remain with patients in imminent end-of-life situations; and patients undergoing same day procedures may be accompanied to the facility by a companion and that companion may remain in a hospital designated waiting area until the patient is discharged, unless otherwise disallowed by the hospital according to the patient's status, condition, circumstances, or hospital policy. Visitors may be present during pediatric and childbirth procedures and with patients with an intellectual, developmental, or other cognitive disabilities, or end of life situations and in other situations as authorized by the hospital, depending upon the patient's status and condition.

These restrictions exist to protect the welfare of the patients in those units and to facilitate healthcare providers' ability to treat them. However, in no case should a patient who needs support be prevented from having visitors or support persons. Visitors and support persons are expected to respect and comply with these restrictions.

Details about hospital visitation policies must be posted on the facility's website. Hospitals should have personnel available to discuss visitation policies with patients or their support persons, if requested.

All visitors must adhere to the following policies and practices:

- Visitors must wear face coverings at all times, regardless of visitor or patient vaccination status for influenza or COVID-19.
- Visitors may be provided with and asked to wear additional personal protective equipment (PPE), as appropriate to the patient's condition or diagnosis(es) as recommended by the Department, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and hospital policy.
- Visitors must be advised regarding how to perform appropriate and effective hand hygiene and the proper donning, doffing, and disposal of PPE and must adhere to such procedures.
- Visitors who fail to wear a face covering and other PPE as requested by the facility will be asked to leave the facility.
- Visitors must undergo symptom and temperature checks upon entering the facility and shall be denied entry if they report exposure to or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 during the prior 10 days or have a temperature equal to or greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Once in the facility, visitors must remain in the patient's room throughout the visit, except when directed to leave by hospital staff during aerosol-generating procedures or other procedures or circumstances for which visitors are usually asked to leave, or to use the restroom, and must be appropriately distanced from any other patients or staff.
- Visitors must be at least 12 years of age except in rare exceptions as determined by the hospital.

Hospitals must:

- Provide written information to visitors and/or discuss the potential risks and benefits of the visitor's presence with the visitor and, depending upon the patient's condition, the patient. The Department will provide a template for Hospital use.
- Ensure the ability to contact visitors as part of contact tracing, if necessary. The Department strongly recommends that hospitals collect, in electronic format, the visitor's name, contact information, date(s) of visit(s), and name of the patient(s) visited. If collected, this information must be maintained for a minimum of 4 weeks from the date the visitor was last in the facility.
- Monitor visitor compliance with wearing face coverings and PPE and must ask visitor who fail to comply to leave the facility.

The Department may adjust visitation policies based on the prevalence of COVID-19 in a region or county.

Questions about this guidance may be sent to hospinfo@health.ny.gov.