



State of Vermont
Agency of Human Services
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Michael K. Smith, *Secretary*

December 15, 2020

Pursuant to Executive Order 01-20, Declaration of State of Emergency in Response to COVID-19 and National Guard Call-Out, as restated and amended, effective immediately the Agency of Human Services has **revised** the minimum standard for visitation policies and procedures for all hospitals throughout Vermont. Prior guidance, issued on November 16, 2020, is hereby rescinded and replaced by the following guidance.

All hospitals are directed to develop a policy for their facility which shall be no less restrictive than the standards developed in the following guidance. These policies and procedures for visitation shall be in place from now until changed, or the expiration of the Executive Order, currently January 15, 2021.

Agency of Human Services

COVID-19 REVISED Hospital Visitor/Welcoming Policy Directives Effective Immediately

Family members and loved ones play a key role in supporting and comforting those who are sick and ill. As we all seek to prevent the further spread of COVID-19, AHS is making temporary changes to Visitor/Welcoming policies to protect the health of both employees and patients.

To protect the health of both the workforce and patients, AHS is establishing the following requirements for all hospitals throughout Vermont:

For Inpatient/Acute Care:

- ***No visitors are permitted*** at this time and until further notice with some very limited exceptions detailed below. For the allowed exceptions, each hospital will implement entry control points in their hospitals to enable the screening of all individuals entering their facilities.
- The limited exceptions include:
 - One support person on Labor and Delivery;
 - One parent or support person for pediatric patients – one consistent support is strongly recommended, but when necessary a second support can be identified as an alternate;
 - One visitor/support person escorting an individual undergoing same-day surgery or an ambulatory procedure;
 - One consistent support person may be permitted in other rare circumstances such as a patient with communication needs (i.e., persons who are deaf or who do not understand/speak English), or a patient with a cognitive impairment or disability who requires assistance to access care; and
 - For patients in end of life care, the care team will manage decisions around visitation.
- The unit will determine whether an individual attempting to visit meets one of the established exceptions and will screen the individual before permitting entry.

Emergency Department and Express/Urgent Care:

- All patients and family members entering Emergency Departments or Express Care/Urgent Care will be screened upon entry into the facility.
- No visitors are permitted with few exceptions:
 - One parent or support person should accompany pediatric patients;
 - One support person may be permitted in other rare circumstances such as a patient with communication needs (i.e., persons who are deaf or who do not understand/speak English), or a patient with a cognitive impairment or disability who requires assistance to access care; and
 - Visitation for patients in end of life care will be managed the care team (in the ED only).

Outpatient Clinics:

- Visitors/family members are not permitted to accompany patients to outpatient visits unless the patient requires support and assistance to access their appointment, such as a patient with communication needs (i.e., persons who are deaf or who do not understand/speak English), or a patient with a cognitive impairment or disability who requires assistance to access care. Support people providing this level of assistance by accompanying a patient will be screened upon check-in at the clinic.
- One parent or support person may accompany pediatric patients.
- Patients who would benefit from other forms of support during a visit (such as a family member to listen, participate in the discussion, etc.) are encouraged to include support people via phone or other technology.

For all permitted visitors entering a hospital, hospitals shall:

- Restrict entrances into all medical buildings and clinics.
- Ensure that everyone who enters any facility will be asked the purpose of their visit to the medical center.
- Keep and implement a written process to screen all permitted visitors intending to enter the facility for symptoms of COVID-19 or for recent out-of-state travel or social gatherings. Permitted visitors who are symptomatic or who have recently traveled or engaged in social gatherings shall be prevented from entry.
- Implement a process for tracking the permitted visitors associated with each patient and implement access control for visitation to the patient.
- Require all permitted visitors to be masked and maintain a face and nose covering for the entirety of the visit. Visitors are permitted to wear a mask of their own but the hospital shall provide a mask if one is needed.
- Keep and implement guidelines for the conduct of permitted visitors including:
 - Direction to remain in the patient's room for the duration of the visit;
 - Limiting traffic in hallways; and
 - Prohibiting congregating in waiting rooms, cafeterias and lobbies before, after or between visits.
- Prevent visitors from in-person visiting with patients suspected of having COVID-19 or test positive for COVID-19. Hospitals should make every effort to support patient and family interaction by deploying the use of technology.
- Require permitted visitors to clean their hands upon entry/exit from the building, entry/exit from the unit or clinic and entry/exit from patient rooms.
- Permit only Americans with Disabilities Act service animals to accompany family

members/support people. All other animals, including previously-approved therapy dogs and support animals, are not allowed at this time.

- Exceptions to this policy may be made in extenuating circumstances, including but not limited to visiting patients and residents receiving end-of-life care.

Other:

- Visitors to pharmacies who present with any symptoms must access a pharmacy within a hospital through remote means, such as delivery outside the facility, that do not require entering the facility.
- Employees may not visit patients either on or off-duty unless they are an approved permitted visitor.
- Suspend all hospital volunteer programs until further notice, with the following exceptions: certified birth doulas, sexual assault support volunteers, and substance abuse peer mentors. Hospitals must provide these permitted volunteers with appropriate personal protective equipment and COVID-19 risk-reduction training.

SUSPENSION OF OPERATIONS:

If the Vermont Department of Health determines that a COVID-19 outbreak has occurred and providers cannot safely care for Vermonters in a way that (1) limits the exposure of patients and staff to COVID-19; (2) preserves PPE or other vital equipment or materials (e.g., ventilators); and (3) preserves inpatient hospital capacity, the State may prescribe infection prevention measures as necessary. Depending on the severity of the outbreak, the Vermont Department of Health may require all Vermont providers to adhere to issued guidance.