



Department of Health

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

JAMES V. McDONALD, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

JOHANNE E. MORNE, M.S.
Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner

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DHDTC DAL#: 23-11
Revised Visitation Guidance

Dear Chief Executive Officer:

The purpose of this correspondence is to provide hospitals with updated guidance related to visitation. This document supersedes previous guidance regarding visitation, except for the December 9, 2021, Virtual Visitation Device Guidance accessible at https://www.health.ny.gov/professionals/hospital_administrator/letters/, which remains in effect.

Separation of patients from their loved ones and support persons during a hospitalization can cause significant stress and anxiety. Visits are essential and contribute to the patient's well-being and care and must be allowed to the maximum extent possible. Consistent with 10 NYCRR Section 405.7(c)(20), hospitals must authorize family members, support persons, and other adults, including end-of-life religious, spiritual leaders and/or cultural advisors, to visit, consistent with the facility's ability to receive visitors.

Support persons have a different role than visitors. A support person may be a family member, guardian, personal care assistant or other paid or unpaid attendant selected to be onsite at the hospital with a patient with a disability or cognitive impairment to assist the patient physically or emotionally or ensure effective communication with the patient. Not all patients may need or qualify for a support person. Patients with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) and/or cognitive impairments that make it difficult for them to communicate, understand health care information or make health care decisions, or perform activities of daily life, have the right to have a support person present during their hospitalization. Hospitals must ensure that a patients' rights are met if they have I/DD and/or cognitive impairments and need the assistance of a support person.

For general visitation, hospitals may set the maximum number of visitation hours and visitors for various units in the hospital based on the patient's status, condition, and situation. A hospital's visitation policies must be posted on the hospital's website for access by the public.

In addition to the general visitation addressed in the paragraph above, hospitals must also ensure that for:

- Labor and Delivery, up to 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.

- Pediatric patients may have up to two designated support persons with them at all times, including during pediatric procedures, and these individuals may rotate.
- Patients with I/DD and patients with cognitive impairments, including dementia, may designate at least one support person to remain with them through their hospitalization, and additional visitors may also be with the patient during designated visiting hours.
- Up to two support persons may also be designated to remain with patients in imminent end-of-life situations.

Questions regarding this correspondence may be referred to hospinfo@health.ny.gov.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Shulman, DrPH, MS
Director
Division of Hospitals and
Diagnostic & Treatment Centers