



Purpose

To provide written guidance for staff to promote the principles of patient and family centered care to meet the needs of our patients and families for support, comfort and care while reducing the risk of infection by identifying and limiting exposure to contagious illnesses and to identify unsafe and otherwise inappropriate areas for children and other visitors.

Policy

1. This policy and procedure is intended to promote the healing environment in which patients, healthcare professionals, staff, families and visitors work together to improve the health of patients with minimal risk of infection or injury.
2. Families and patients' support systems play a critical role in the healing process.
3. The presence of families and friends helps expand our understanding of our patients' needs and their preferred treatment and care.
4. Skagit Regional Health (SRH) recognizes the need for flexibility in visiting hours to meet our patients' need for comfort, safety and care.
5. SRH intends that any restrictions on visitation are reasonable and necessary when based on the patient's needs, clinical condition and as necessary to protect the health and safety of everyone in the healthcare setting.
6. In the interest of infection prevention, visitation may be prohibited or limited based on public health concerns.
 - a. Visitation for COVID-19 patients or those suspected of COVID-19 is limited to those essential to the well-being and care of the patient as determined by the clinical care team.
7. Healthcare professionals may determine when patient care areas are unsafe or otherwise inappropriate for visitors or children.
8. Departments, clinics and units may have additional specific visitor guidelines.
9. Safe and appropriate conduct is expected of all visitors including family members.
10. Visitors may be asked to wait in reception or waiting areas and may be provided with additional instructions based on patient needs, equipment, treatment and procedural safety rules.
 - a. For surgical services and cath lab patients, patients may have one person accompany them pre- and post-procedure and may wait in the waiting area during the procedure. Waiting room space is limited.
11. Patients and their support person(s) will be provided with written notice of their visitation rights.
12. Parents or family members of pediatric patients are encouraged to remain with the child, including overnight, during the hospitalization to provide comfort and emotional support to their child as well as provide useful information to staff.
13. Visiting hours will not be restricted, limited or denied based on:
 - a. Race, color, culture, creed, ethnicity, religion or national origin;
 - b. Sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression; or
 - c. Disability; and
 - d. All visitors enjoy full and equal visitation privileges consistent with patient preferences.
14. Visitors are partners in care to the healthcare facility and must be in the hospital or clinics for a clinic visit, specific appointment, legitimate business purpose or to visit a patient.
15. As partners in care the following principles and policies apply to visitors:
 - a. In collaboration with SRH Security Services, visitation privileges may be revoked if visitors present danger or undue disruption to patients, staff or other visitors or at the request of the patient:
 - i. In these circumstances, visitors do not have an absolute right to entry onto the hospital or clinic campuses at anytime;
 - ii. The patient's request for visitors may be respectfully declined if the healthcare professional reasonably believes the specific visitor(s) present a risk of harm to the patient, other patients or staff;
 - iii. These risks of harm must be explained clearly to the patient;
 - b. Other than to receive healthcare as a patient, if we become aware of certain persons on sexual predator lists will not be permitted to visit the hospital except under the following circumstance:
 - i. If such a visit is requested based on extenuating circumstances such as the birth or death of a family member, a humanitarian exception may be made only by an Executive Leadership Team

- Member;
 - ii. If the exception is granted, the visitor must be directly supervised at all times by a member of the SRH Security Department and escorted off of the medical campus.
16. The Administration of SRH has a "zero tolerance" for any threat or threatening behavior by any visitor to the healthcare setting;
 - a. Any threats will be responded to by immediate removal of the person from the facility;
 - b. Threats of harm made by an outpatient may be the basis for termination of the healthcare provider or clinic / patient relationship;
 - c. Visitors may be prohibited or restricted from visiting if they are found to be or reasonably suspected of providing the patient or any other person with illegal substances or items that may be used as a weapon:
 - i. This is a clinical and security determination;
 - ii. Restricted or prohibited visitors may bring a complaint during business hours to the Regional Director of Risk and Compliance, the Chief Nurse Officer or Chief Medical Officer;
 - d. Security may be called to escort the visitor off the medical campus;
 - e. A Code Gray may be called if the visitor becomes threatening in any way either verbally or physically;
 - f. The local Police Department may be called by any staff person who believes themselves, a patient or any other person to be in imminent risk of harm due to the actions or behavior of a visitor.
 17. All staff receive education regarding visitation rights:
 - a. All staff are required to be vigilant in questioning the presence of anyone in the facility before 5:30 am and after 7:00 pm without a visitor's badge or who lacks proper identification;
 - b. Any person lacking in appropriate identification will be asked to immediately obtain the identification or leave the facility;
 18. Due to patient sensitivity, no flowers or plants are permitted on the second floor of the hospital (PCC/CCU) or CVH CCU.
 19. All visitors must check with nursing prior to:
 - a. Entering a patient room with a "Precaution" sign on the door;
 - i. Visitors will be given instruction on the use of personal protection equipment as needed;
 - ii. All visitors must wash their hands upon entering or leaving a patient room;
 - b. Offering a patient food or fluids to any patient with NPO status indicated;
 - c. Feeding or assisting in feeding a patient.

Patient Visitors

1. SRH recognizes that family members, personal representatives, friends and clergy are an important part of the healthcare team. Patients have the right to receive, subject to the patient's consent, visitors designated by the patient, including but not limited to a spouse, civil union partner, domestic partner (including a same sex partner), another family member, or a friend. The patient has the right to withdraw or deny consent at any time either orally or in writing for the visitors. SRH will not restrict, limit, or deny visitation privileges based on race, skin color, age, national origin, ancestry, nationality, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, or disability.
2. Responsible friends/family members are encouraged to accompany a patient.
3. SRH respects the rights of patients to designate who they wish to act as their patient representative and to see as visitors.
4. Patients will be asked at the time of admission:
 - a. If they wish to have a family member or representative(s) of his/her choice; and
 - b. To have his/her own physician notified promptly of his/her admission to the hospital;
 - c. Who they wish to name as their "patient representative";
 - d. Patients may withdraw their consent for a visitor at any time; and
 - e. Patient may indicate if there is a specific person or persons they do not wish to visit them.
5. For the purposes of this policy, the term "family" includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Spouses, domestic partners and both different sex and same sex significant others;
 - b. A minor patient's parents or guardian regardless of the gender of either parent/guardian;
 - c. The concept of "parenthood" is to be liberally construed by staff without limitation as encompassing:
 - i. Legal parents, foster parents, step parents;
 - ii. Those serving in loco parentis and
 - iii. Other persons performing caretaker roles.
6. Patients or their patient representative(s) may receive, at the patient's consent, visitors as designated by the patient, including but not limited to the following persons:
 - a. Spouse or domestic partner (including same-sex domestic partner);

- b. Other family members or friends provided it is in accordance with the safe delivery of care and the provision of a safe and secure patient environment.
- 7. SRH will accept as valid without requesting documentation, anyone who asserts themselves as the patient's:
 - a. Spouse or domestic partner (whether or not formally established and including a same-sex domestic partner);
 - b. Parent (including someone who has stood in loco parentis for the patient who is a minor child); or
 - c. Other family member.
- 8. If the patient is incapacitated and more than one individual claims to be the patient's family member or representative, staff may ask each individual for documentation supporting his/her claim.
 - a. The patient representative takes precedence over any non-designated relationship;
 - b. Staff may contact the AOC or Risk Management for further clarification in these situations.

Hospital Visiting Hours

1. Skagit Valley Hospital (SVH) and Cascade Valley Hospital (CVH) acknowledge the need for patients to have the comfort and companionship of people who are important to them during hospitalization to help reduce anxiety and stress.
2. General inpatient visiting hours are 5:30 am until 7:00 pm.
 - a. For security purposes, visitor entry to the hospital outside of normal visiting hours is limited to the Emergency Department entrance;
 - b. Visitors who are already at the patient's bedside when visiting hours end may be given a visitors badge if they have coordinated an overnight stay;
 - c. These visitors may continue to visit without restriction other than those described here.
3. Nursing staff will assess each situation and will support and advocate for the wishes and desires of the patient;
 - a. The nurse will partner with the patient and family in determining whether an overnight stay is needed or desired;
 - b. Overnight stays will be considered on a case-by-case basis;
 - c. The staff may provide clean linens as needed;
 - d. Staff will direct family and visitors to use public restrooms located on each floor; and
 - e. To obtain food or beverages from various locations;
 - f. During times when masks are required to enter the facility, visitors must eat and drink in designated locations, not in patient rooms.
 - g. Visitors to the Family Birth Center may bring in outside food upon approval by the nursing staff.
4. Mental Health Center visiting hours are:
 - a. 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm seven days a week
 - b. Visits must be approved and planned in advance with our treatment team;
 - c. Visits must be determined beneficial to patient and their treatment plan;
 - d. Minors are prohibited on the unit;
 - e. One visitor per patient on any given day;
 - f. No outside food or beverage allowed on the unit;
 - g. All visitor personal belongings must be locked before entering the unit (including phones, keys, wallets, purses, etc.);
 - h. Visitors will be scanned with a wand before entering the unit;
 - i. No public restrooms on the unit. If visitors leave to use the restroom, they will not be permitted back on the unit.
 - j. Visitors may be asked to leave under the discretion of the staff due to any safety concerns;
 - k. Visitors must sign a confidentiality statement before entering the unit.
 - l. Visiting must take place in dining/TV area of the unit, no exceptions
5. Family Birth Center is family oriented, and visiting hours are not restricted with the following limitations:
 - a. The number of visitors may be restricted as indicated by the patient's condition;
 - b. All support persons must be over the age of 16;
 - c. Children must be supervised by an adult at all times and must remain in the patient's room;
 - i. No minor visitors overnight;
 - ii. Minor children must be direct siblings and accompanied by an adult;
 - d. Access to the unit is limited from midnight until 5:00 am; and
 - e. Visitors will be admitted only with the patient or the patient's representative's consent.
 - f. SVH SCN Only 2 visitors at a time

Visitor Health Screening

1. Visitors who have signs or symptoms of illness should avoid the hospital and clinics;
 - a. Illnesses such as colds, flu, respiratory illness, GI disturbance, COVID-19, etc. are highly contagious;
 - b. If key family members or visitors must be in attendance for patient safety or support, staff will instruct the individual regarding required infection prevention precautions such as the use of masks, gloves or hand hygiene.
2. All visitors must wash their hands before entering and when leaving a patient's room.
3. All visitors must go through a brief health screening for COVID-19 at the point of entry to the facility, as per CDC guidelines. Visitors will be asked questions about their state of health before visiting certain areas of the hospital.
4. Family members or visitors are encouraged to stay in the patient room, the main floor lobby or cafeteria or public waiting rooms.
5. In the interest of infection prevention, visitation may be prohibited or limited based on public health concerns.
6. Visitors recently exposed to any communicable disease listed here may not visit any immunosuppressed patients as determined by their attending physician until illness or risk is resolved;
 - a. Chicken pox;
 - b. Measles;
 - c. Herpes; or
 - d. Viral hepatitis.
7. Visitors who decline to answer questions regarding their current state of wellness may not be permitted in the acute care areas.
8. During flu season or other times where a public health concern is present, to prevent the spread of contagious disease: See also, [Pandemic Response Plan](#).
 - a. Visitors may be asked to wear masks when in acute care areas;
 - b. Children may be restricted from visiting certain areas of the hospital including the Intensive Care Unit and the Family Birth Center based on the nurses' assessment and determination.
9. Service animals, therapy animals or pets may be permitted based on the policy, [Animal Visitation](#).
10. Exceptions must be approved by the supervising physician, Chief Medical Officer or Infection Prevention Nurse.
 - a. Exceptions must not put other patients or staff at risk of contracting an infection.

Visitation of Minors in Ambulatory Care

1. While we understand that our patients have family responsibilities, we do not recommend that children accompany patients to clinic visits, treatments or procedures.
2. For the purposes of this policy, the term "children" generally refers to individuals less than 12 years of age or those individuals who require child care supervision.
3. Responsibility for the child's behavior and safety rests with the parent and/or the parent's designee.
4. Patients accompanied by disruptive children may be asked to have their care rescheduled.
5. If children must accompany the parent/patient to a clinic visit or outpatient procedure, the following conditions apply:
 - a. Minor children must be accompanied and supervised at all times by a responsible person who is not the patient;
 - b. A responsible person will generally be an adult, 18 years of age or older;
 - i. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of clinic staff including but not limited to a responsible teen-aged child or sibling requiring no immediate supervision;
 - c. Those supervising children are asked to carefully watch their children to prevent any safety issues and to avoid disturbing other patients and families;
 - d. If no responsible person is available at the time of a procedure or test, the healthcare professional may ask the parent/patient to reschedule the appointment;
 - e. If the child/children's behavior delays or disrupts the patient's care, the patient may be asked to reschedule their appointment;
 - f. During scheduling, staff will advise patients that childcare is not available on-site and may not be provided by staff.
6. Clinic staff and/or other patients/families may not take responsibility for care or supervision of a minor child who is not their own.

Visitation of Minors during Hospital Care

1. Certain areas of the hospital, such as surgery/recovery areas, PT, diagnostic areas, procedure areas may be inappropriate for children and/or may have additional guidelines which will be made available to patients;
2. If children must accompany the parent/patient, the following conditions apply:
 - a. Minor children visiting inpatients must be accompanied and supervised at all times by a responsible person who is not hospitalized;
 - b. A responsible person will generally be an adult, 18 years of age or older;
 - i. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of hospital staff including but not limited to a responsible teen-aged child or sibling requiring no immediate supervision;
 - c. Those supervising children are asked to carefully watch their children to prevent any safety issues and to avoid disturbing other patients and families;
 - d. During admission, staff will advise patients that childcare is not available on-site and may not be provided by staff.
3. Hospital staff and/or other inpatients may not take responsibility for care or supervision of a minor child who is not an inpatient;
4. In such situations, staff may contact the House or Shift Supervisor for direction and assistance with interactions related to specific circumstances;
5. Children who are found in the hospital without an adult supervisor will be taken to the Security Office;
 - i. For very young children an announcement will be made to locate the child's parent.
6. Breast feeding infants of adult patients may be in the patient's bed while feeding.
 - a. As with all minor children, there must be someone other than the patient to accompany, care for and supervise the infant.

Documentation

1. Hospital information: Patient Rights; Visitation.
2. The name(s) of the person(s) the patient wishes to or does not wish to have visit them may be documented in the patient's medical record.

References

CMS Conditions of Participation: Hospital Patient's Rights and Patient Representatives, [42 CFR 482.13](#).

References

Reference Type	Title	Notes
Documents referenced by this document		
Referenced Documents	Animal Visitation	
Referenced Documents	SRH Pandemic Response Plan	
Referenced Documents	42 CFR 482.13	
Documents which reference this document		
Referenced Documents	Animal Visitation	
Referenced Documents	FBC Visitors - Special Care Nursery	
Referenced Documents	COVID-19 Visitor Screening and Management	
Referenced Documents	Patient Rights and Responsibilities	
Signed/Approved By	(05/16/2022 08:13 AM PST) Committee SRH Policy & Procedure	
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