

**Skagit Regional Health****Visiting Rights and Hours for Inpatients and Ambulatory Care Settings**Patient Care Services System
Wide

18532

Policy

(Rev: 4)Official

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 help 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. Healthcare professionals may determine when patient care areas are unsafe or otherwise inappropriate for visitors or children.
7. Departments, clinics and units may have additional specific visitor guidelines.
8. Safe and appropriate conduct is expected of all visitors including family members.
9. 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.
10. Patients and their support person(s) will be provided with written notice of their visitation rights.
11. Parents or family members of pediatric patients are encouraged to remain with the child during the hospitalization to provide comfort and emotional support to their child as well as provide useful information to staff.
12. Visiting hours will not be restricted, limited or denied based on:
 - a. Race, color, national origin, or religion;
 - b. Sex, gender identity, sexual orientation; or
 - c. Disability; and
 - d. All visitors enjoy full and equal visitation privileges consistent with patient preferences.
13. Visitors are "invited guests" 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.
14. As "invited guests" 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, certain persons on sexual predator lists will not be permitted to visit the hospital under any circumstances:

- 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 Senior Administration;
 - 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.
15. 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;
 - i. If being removed from the facility results in the patient missing a test or service, the patient must may be asked to reschedule the appointment;
 - 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 Director of Risk Management, the Chief Nurse Executive 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 Mt Vernon 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.
16. 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 9:30 pm without a visitors 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;
 - c. Staff may be subject to disciplinary action if:
 - i. They are aware of unidentified persons in the facility; and
 - ii. They fail to request verification of identity and reason for presence on campus; and
 - iii. Staff must contact Security if the person appears to be in the hospital without justification.
17. Due to staff allergies no flowers or plants are permitted on the second floor of the hospital (PCC/CCU).
 - a. No lilies are permitted on MPC or OSC.
18. 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 verify whether the patient should be kept, "Nothing by Mouth" or "npo" status prior to a test or procedure;
 - c. Feeding or assisting in feeding a patient.

Patient Designated Visitors

1. SRH recognizes that family members, personal representatives or friends 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 a hospital administrator or Risk Management for further clarification in these situations.

Visiting Hours

1. Skagit Valley Hospital (SVH) acknowledges 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 9:30 pm.
 - a. For security purposes, visitor entry to the hospital is limited to the Emergency Department entrance;
 - b. Visitors arriving before 5:30 am and after 9:30 pm, must check-in at the security desk in the Emergency department to obtain a visitors badge;
 - c. Visitors who are already at the patient's bedside may be given a visitors badge;
 - d. 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. The staff will provide clean linens as needed;
 - c. Staff may direct family and visitors to use public restrooms located on each floor; and
 - d. To obtain food or beverages from various locations;
 - e. Social Work Services are available during normal business hours to assist with family housing.
4. Mental Health Center visiting hours are:
 - a. 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday;
 - b. 3:00 pm to 8:00 pm Saturday and Sunday;
 - c. Visitors may be required to sign a confidentiality statement;
 - d. Minor children are only permitted to visit if:
 - i. The Provider Team determines it is beneficial to the patient's treatment plan; and
 - ii. Visits must be approved in advance; and
 - iii. Visits must be planned in advance.

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. Children must be supervised by an adult at all times and must remain in the patient's room;
 - c. Access to the unit is limited from midnight until 5:00 am; and
 - d. Visitors will be admitted only with the patient or the patient's representative's consent.

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, 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. Visitors will be informed that they may 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 cancer patients on chemotherapy 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, to prevent the spread of contagious disease: See also, [Pandemic Flu 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, Infection Prevention Nurse or an epidemiologist.
 - 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 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](#).

Referenced Documents

Reference Type	Title	Notes
Documents referenced by this document		
Referenced Documents	42 CFR 482.13	
Referenced Documents	Animal Visitation	
Referenced Documents	Pandemic Flu Response Plan.	
Documents which reference this document		
Referenced Documents	Patient Rights and Responsibilities	

Signed by

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