

Medlink Management Services, Inc.

Lake Butler Hospital

Compliance Policy Manual

Policy #: 04-01-26

Title: Patient Visitation

Applies To: All Staff

PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to define and set expectations regarding persons visiting hospitalized patients and recognizes our commitment to provide visitation in accordance with our non-discrimination policy, which provides access without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion, marital status, citizenship, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and/or other legally protected classifications.

POLICY: It is the policy of Lake Butler Hospital (LBH) to support patient and family-centered care throughout the patient's stay, and to ensure the safety of all patients, visitors, and staff, while at the Hospital. We strive to provide an environment that is comfortable and appropriate for patient recovery. Family, friends and/or representatives of the patients' choosing are encouraged to visit and provide support during the patient's hospital stay. Patients and families are informed of visiting hours and rules during admission and orientation to the facility. Visitors are welcome unless their presence interferes with others' rights, safety, or is medically contraindicated. In general, patients have the right to identify a Support Person, or Essential Caregiver, to be available during their stay. Some specialty areas have additional rules for visitation that are listed below under Specialty Areas. Patients have the right to withdraw permission or deny visitors at any time.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Essential Caregiver:** A patient designated visitor who is a family member, friend, guardian, or other individual. The Essential Caregiver will not be required, nor expected to, provide any necessary care to the patient.
- **Family or Family Member:** The terms "family" or "family member" include any person(s), as defined by the patient, who plays a significant role in an individual's life. This may include a person(s) not legally related to the individual. "Family" includes spouses, domestic partners, and significant others of both the same and opposite sex. "Family" includes a minor patient's parents, regardless of the gender of either parent. Solely for purposes of this visitation policy, the concept of parenthood is to be liberally construed without limitation as encompassing: biological parents,

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legal parents, foster parents, same-sex parents, stepparents, those serving in loco parentis, and other persons operating in caretaker roles, consistent with applicable law.

- **Support Person:** A person chosen by the patient to be present with them during their stay, unless the individual's presence infringes on the rights of others, patient, or staff safety, or is medically or therapeutically contraindicated. A Support Person may or may not be the patient's surrogate decision maker or legally authorized representative and may be a family member, friend, or other individual.
- **Visitor:** A "visitor" is defined as a guest of the patient. "Family" and "family members" are visitors.

STANDARDS:

General Provisions

- A. In general, visitors are encouraged to visit the patient from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (08:00-20:00) . In most cases, to avoid overcrowding in the patient's room, 2 visitors are allowed to visit a patient at a time during regular visiting hours. The patient, patient's designated representative or the healthcare team, may limit visitation based on the individual needs of the patient.
- B. A visitor who has been designated by the patient as an Essential Caregiver will be allowed in-person visitation for at least 2 hours in addition to normal visitation hours.
- C. Consensual physical contact, such as holding hands or hugging, is allowed between the patient and visitor.
- D. If the patient is on isolation precautions, the visitor must comply with the applicable isolation precautions. Hospital staff will provide the necessary education to the visitor regarding the isolation precautions.
- E. In the event the hospital suspends in-person visitation, the following circumstances for in-person visitation will be allowed per Florida Law, unless the patient objects.:

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1. End of life situations
2. The patient who was living with family before being admitted to the Hospital is struggling with the change in environment and lack of in-person family support.
3. The patient is making one or more major medical decisions.
4. The patient is experiencing emotional distress or grieving the loss of a friend or family member who recently died.
5. The patient needs cueing or encouragement to eat or drink which was previously provided by a family member or caregiver.
6. The patient who used to talk and interact with others is seldom speaking.
7. In cases of childbirth, including labor and delivery
8. Pediatric patients.

F. Special considerations that determine the amount of time visitors spend with the patient include:

1. The clinical and emotional needs of the patient. Having Visitors present must not put the patient at undue risk or cause harm. Patients who exhibit symptoms including, but not limited to, exhaustion, overstimulation, or marked increase in agitation may have visitation limited.
2. Visitors who are unable or unwilling to comply with hospital infection control policies may be asked to limit visitation or may have visitation suspended.
3. Visitation may be suspended in situations when an individual's presence infringes on the rights of others or poses a safety risk for patients or staff.
4. The need to maintain a sterile environment during bedside procedures may result in visitors being asked to leave the room temporarily.
5. Visitors with prohibitive legal documentation, such as restraining orders, will not be allowed to visit.

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- 6. Visitors may be asked to leave the patient room or area in the event of a new incoming patient, deterioration in a patient's status, or disruption of the therapeutic environment.
- G. To maintain a therapeutic healing environment, visits should be quiet and pleasant.
- H. Patients always have the right to refuse visitors.
- I. Visitors are expected to be as quiet as possible in the patient care areas.
- J. Visitors are expected to adhere to all isolation restrictions. Unit staff will provide education to visitors regarding isolation restrictions.
- K. Visitors are expected to be appropriately dressed (shirt and shoes are required).
- L. Visitors must be able to care for themselves. If they are unable or unwilling to care for themselves, they must be accompanied by another adult who agrees to supervise and care for them.
- M. The nursing staff and Security staff are responsible for informing visitors and patients of the visitation guidelines.
- N. Security staff will be contacted if a visitor is disruptive, inebriated, abusive, threatening, coercive, disrespectful to staff or patients, or otherwise interferes with hospital operations or patient care. Security will be notified if a visitor is suspected of committing a criminal act.
- O. Food preparation is not permitted in the visitor lounges or patient rooms. Coffee makers, crock pots, Coleman stoves, hot plates, or any other types of cooking devices are not permitted at any time.
- P. Food brought into the Hospital should be kept to a minimum. Any food brought in should be intended solely for the visitor or the specific patient being visited if diet allows. Food may not be distributed to other patients. Food should be cleared with the clinical staff treating the patient before being given to a patient to ensure that dietary restrictions are observed. No alcoholic beverages are allowed on the Hospital campus.

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After Hours Visitation (8 p.m. – 8 a.m.)

- A. Visitors are encouraged to leave the facility after 8 p.m. . Visitors choosing to remain after 8 p.m. will be directed to stay in the patient's room.
- B. Adults staying overnight must be able to care for themselves and, at the discretion of the nurse, may participate in the basic care of the patient such as feeding and bathing.

Overnight Visitation

- A. One visitor is allowed overnight stays in private rooms. We discourage overnight visitors in semi-private rooms as we need to be sensitive and not infringe upon others' privacy. Visitors shall inform the Charge RN if staying overnight in a semiprivate room. Accommodations will be made, when possible, to move patient to a private room.

Child Visitors

All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult over the age of 18 or a parent at all times based upon parental supervision and appropriateness of the patient's condition. The patient being visited may not serve as the responsible adult for child visitors. Due to sizing limitations with proper fitting masks for children, no children under the age of 16 will be allowed to visit a patient that is positive for COVID-19. The following guidelines are to be followed:

- A. A responsible adult will always accompany the child and will check-in with the unit nurse manager or designee upon arrival to the unit.
- B. Children with an illness, cough or skin rash may not visit patients.
- C. For their safety, children are not permitted to visit patients in isolation, unless approved by the Chief Nursing Officer.
- D. Children are not permitted to stay overnight unless unusual circumstances warrant such action, and it is approved at the discretion of the unit Charge Nurse or designee.

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- E. If any of the above guidelines are not adhered to, or the child's behavior is disruptive, the unit nurse manager or designee, or security officer will request that the responsible adult leave the unit with the child. Security will be notified of failure to comply with the request.

Specialty Areas

- A. Emergency Department (ED):
 - 1. Due to space constraints, visitation in the ED/Resuscitation areas is restricted to one visitor at the discretion of the Charge Nurse or designee.
 - 2. No children are permitted to visit in the ED patient care area under the age of 12 years, except when warranted due to unusual circumstances and at the discretion of the Charge Nurse or designee.
- B. In the Rehab area, laboratory area, and other areas with limited space, the preferred number of visitors at the bedside is no more than one at a time. If the patient is nearing end of life, special circumstances or accommodations may be made for additional visitors on a case-by-case basis.

COVID-19/Illness/Other Pandemic/Infectious Illness Provision

- A. All visitors are required to wear a surgical mask while indoors, regardless of vaccination status. Surgical masks are available at hospital entry points.
- B. All visitors are required to be screened upon entry to any hospital building for symptoms of COVID-19/illness.

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RESPONSIBILITIES: The manager for each unit is responsible for ensuring that staff adhere to the Visitation Policy. Department Leaders have responsibility to direct or correct staff and visitors who are not adhering to the policy.

ATTACHMENTS/RESOURCES: Infection control and Education policy for visitors.

ASSOCIATED CROSS-REFERENCES: None