



Memo to Leadership Forum

Date: July 8, 2020

Subject: VISITING PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

I would like to thank all of our WRH team who have worked so hard over these past few months throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in assisting both our patients and their loved ones through a very challenging period in health care.

A big part of providing that compassionate assistance and comfort to patients and their loved ones has involved helping them navigate the new policies and procedures for patient visits as directed by the Province. We had a WRH team review the Provincial direction, ethical guidelines and develop the policy. We know that the policy has taken some time for both staff and patients to become familiar with, particularly given the need to include variations based on department-specific exceptions.

As we move through the first six weeks of the new policy there needs to be a refresher to ensure there is clear communication between patient units and the screeners receiving visitors at our patient entrances. As you can imagine, this can be extremely frustrating not just for our staff, but also for visitors who may be hearing different interpretations from various staff about our visitor policies and restrictions.

Therefore, we are asking you once again to review the current Visitation policy which was formalized into practice at the end of May. By fully understanding the policy that applies to your specific patient area, we can ensure we are all on the same page in implementing these carefully worded policies into practice and improve understanding among patients and their loved ones.

Please review the current policy below this memo.

ESCALATION PROCEDURES

We are aware that in some instances, misunderstanding and/or miscommunication can escalate into some tense conversations.

Where there is conflict between what a visitor understands they are allowed to do and what the screener is aware of, we are asking screeners to first check in with Clinical Practice Managers and/or unit managers to better understand a specific patient and/or visitor's circumstances. (If the visit in question occurs after hours, please contact the After Hours Manager).

From the units, where there are situations where a professional staff member has made an exception or exemption to a visitor policy for a particular patient, we are asking that the Clinical Practice Manager make this known to the screening station for that particular campus.

REMEMBER THE VISITOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Lastly, it is important to remember that visiting a loved one in hospital is often a very stressful and emotional time. COVID-19 and the visitor restrictions that continue to be in place can make this challenging period even more difficult.

Therefore, we don't want to add to a loved one's stress by not fully explaining visitor policies particularly when a patient's condition has changed – for example, a patient who goes from being deemed at “end of life” and then later determined to no longer be in critical status. These circumstances which have distinct differences in the visitation policy. We need to review these with visitors and in some cases give them time to adjust to the changes especially if they have already arrived at the hospital for a visit. This is not about giving “exceptions,” but rather giving those who visit enough time to understand what might have changed.

Thank you to all of you who are doing your best and for your own patience and commitment to providing Outstanding Care – No Exceptions! –amid the most challenging hospital work environment we have faced here at WRH.

VISITATION POLICY DURING COVID-19 EFFECTIVE MAY 30, 2020

BACKGROUND

On May 26th, 2020 the Ministry of Health provided direction to Health Care Providers (Regulated Health Professionals who operate a Group Practice of Regulated Health Professionals) as part of the evolving response to the COVID-19 pandemic. WRH is taking additional precautions to keep patients, families, and staff safe including temporary changes to our Visitor Policy. WRH remains committed to patient and family-centered care and will make every effort to ensure that the needs of patients and families are met while these temporary measures are in place. The document provides operational details and requirements as referenced in Directive #2.

MINISTRY DOCUMENT

- [Ministry of Health: COVID-19 Operational Requirements: Health Sector Restart](#)

PURPOSE

Starting Saturday May 30th, 2020, the visitation policy is being amended to support the emotional wellbeing for all patients, families and staff and continue to minimize the risk for all.

POLICY

WRH is allowing patients to have **ONE** essential visitor visit once per day in one specified time slot with some exceptions which are identified below. A maximum of 2 essential visitors may be chosen by the patient to rotate over the patients stay, however **only one of the essential visitors may visit each day and only in one time slot.**

Considerations of which visitors are considered essential should include: those who are visiting/accompanying a patient who is dying or very ill, a parent/guardian of a youth who is a patient, visitors of patients who require physical assistance, and visitors providing essential support to a patient. **ALL** visitors are to wear a mask when in hospital, those who do not come in with one will be provided with one.

ALL visitors are to follow all social distancing and Personal Protective Equipment requirements identified on the units while in hospital.

VISITATION TIMES

ONE ESSENTIAL VISITOR MAY CHOOSE ONE TIME BLOCK PER DAY

- 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
- 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
- 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm (not available in Critical Care)

***Note:** Switchboard will announce overhead when time blocks are over.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC EXCEPTIONS

- **Emergency Department-** 24 hours, 1 visitor per patient- may not enter until patient assessed and admitted to internal department. May not wait in waiting room. Department will contact when visitor can enter.
- **Women in Labour and in Post Partum period** – 24 hours, 1 visitor per patient
- **Paediatrics and NICU patients** – 24 hours, 2 visitors per patient at a time- only 1 parent may stay overnight in paediatrics
- **Patient who is an extended stay in Critical Care** – can access two blocks per day (10:00 am – 12:00 pm, 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm, 8:00 pm – 10:00 pm), 1 visitor at a time (2 in total who can relieve each other)
- **Patient who is palliative** – 24 hours, 1 visitor at a time (2 in total who can relieve each other) **Note:** 2 visitors can attend together for palliative and emergency end of life situations
- **Patient who is end of life** – 24 hours, 2 visitors at a time
- **Cancer Program** – One visitor allowed for in-person physician appointments only. List of approved visitors will be sent to Cancer Centre screening desk daily.
- **Mental Health** – 1 visitor per patient for 30 minutes between 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm. A maximum of 8 visitors will be allowed into 3N and 3S and a maximum of 3 visitors into PICU at a time.
- **Renal Program** – 1 visitor per patient during dialysis treatment between 8:30am-10:00am, 1:30pm – 3:00pm, 7:00pm-8:30pm. Visitors may not wait with patients in waiting rooms prior to treatment starting.
- **Operating Room** – visitor may accompany patient for drop off only, MRP will call after surgery to update on condition
- **Day Surgery and Cath Lab** – visitor may accompany patient for drop off only, department will contact when patient ready for discharge
- **Ambulatory Clinic and Diagnostic Imaging appointments:** visitor may only accompany if patient needs special assistance

VISITORS MAY NOT ATTEND IF THEY:

- Are less than 18 years of age
- Are symptomatic
- Have been outside of Canada in the last 14 days
- Have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days. Proof will need to be provided of all test results.
- Have had close contact with a confirmed case or probable case of COVID-19
- Have had close contact with a person with an acute respiratory illness who has been Outside of Canada in the 14 days before their symptom onset

PATIENT WHO IS COVID POSITIVE/SUSPECTED COVID

- No visitors are allowed for patients who are COVID positive or suspected COVID

PROCESS

- For Inpatients:** All patients will be asked to choose their essential visitor(s)- maximum of 2. If unable the POA/SDM will be contacted to determine the essential visitor(s)- maximum of 2.
 - A list of patients and approved essential visitors is to be faxed to Admitting daily by 0800. Any updates that occur after that time should be faxed and called to the Admitting department as needed. See Appendix A
 - Admitting will provide the list of essential visitors and census report for each unit by 0900 daily to the screening desks.
- For Outpatients:** All patients attending the emergency department, or for other outpatient appointments/procedures will be screened per the screening process below. For any visitor accompanying the patient see previous exceptions.
 - Diagnostic Imaging, Outpatient Procedures- Departments to fax scheduled appointments and approved essential visitors to admitting by 0700 daily. For non scheduled procedures department to call admitting.
- Screening Procedure:** Screeners will ask any visitors presenting to the hospital for their name and who they are visiting in the hospital. The screener will check the approved essential visitor list and confirm that the visitor is allowed to attend the hospital.
- Essential visitors that are on the essential visitor list will then be actively screened by the screener for risk factors and signs and symptoms of COVID 19 using the attached screening tool. Visitors that are not on the essential visitor list will not be allowed to enter the hospital. Screener to contact the department that they are requesting to visit.
 - [Visitor/Patient Screening Form](#)
- The name of the visitor, screening result, unit/patient they are visiting and time block being used will be recorded on the log- see Appendix B.
- Visitors that pass the screen will be asked to wash their hands, and don a mask. They will be instructed to follow all social distancing rules and proceed to the department that they are approved to visit. Visitors that refuse to don a mask will not be allowed to enter.
- Visitors that fail the screen will not be allowed to enter the hospital and will be advised to attend the Assessment Centre at Ouellette Campus for further assessment.

APPEAL PROCESS

If a patient or family member wishes to appeal the visitation policy, they should contact Patient Relations.

Metropolitan Campus - 519-254-5577 ext. 52317

Ouellette Campus - 519-254-5577 ext. 34404

After Hours Manager - 519-254-5577 dial 0 for switchboard and ask for After Hours Manager who will contact the Patient Relations Team

