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**State of Vermont**  
**Agency of Human Services**  
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Michael K. Smith, *Secretary*

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Pursuant to Executive Order 01-20, Declaration of State of Emergency in Response to COVID-19 and National Guard Call-Out, effective immediately the Agency of Human Services has **revised** the minimum standard for visitation policies and procedures for all hospitals throughout Vermont.

All hospitals are directed to develop a policy for their facility which shall be no less restrictive than the standards developed in the following guidance. These policies and procedures for visitation shall be in place from now until changed, or the expiration of the Executive Order on April 15.

Agency of Human Services

## **COVID-19 Policy Change: REVISED Hospital Visitor/Welcoming Policy Directives Effective Immediately**

We know family members and loved ones play a key role in supporting and comforting those who are sick and ill, however, as we seek to prevent the spread of COVID-19, we are making temporary changes to our Visitor/Welcoming policy to protect the health of our employees and patients.

**To protect our workforce and patients, the following individuals we are implementing the following:**

### **For All:**

- Entrances into all medical buildings and clinics will be restricted and everyone who enters will be asked the purpose of their visit to the medical center.
- Only ADA service animals are permitted. All other animals, including previously approved therapy dogs/support animals, are not allowed at this time.

### **Inpatient/Acute Care:**

- No visitors are permitted at this time and until further notice with some very limited exceptions. For the allowed exceptions, each hospital will implement entry control points in their hospitals to enable the screening of all individuals entering their facilities.
- The limited exceptions include:
  - One support person on Labor and Delivery
  - One parent or support person for pediatric patients- one consistent support is strongly recommended, but when necessary a second support can be identified as an alternate
  - One visitor/support person escorting an individual undergoing same-day surgery or an ambulatory procedure
  - One consistent support person may be permitted in other rare circumstances such as for a patient with a cognitive impairment or disability who requires assistance to access care
  - Patients in end of life care- the care team will manage decisions around these exceptions
- Hospitals shall implement a process for tracking the approved visitor associated with each patient and implement access control for visitation to the patient.
- Visitors are strongly encouraged to remain in the patient's room for the duration of the visit, limit traffic in hallways and avoid congregating in waiting rooms, cafeterias and lobbies before, after or between visits.
- The unit will determine whether those attempting to visit meet an exception criteria and ask whether they have a cough/shortness of breath or a fever.
- No visitors will be permitted with patients suspected of having COVID-19 or test positive for COVID-19. We will make every effort to support patient and family interaction by deploying the use of technology.

- Hospital volunteer programs are suspended until further notice.
- Only ADA service animals can accompany family members/support people. All other animals, including previously approved therapy dogs and support animals, are not allowed at this time.
- Exceptions to this policy may be made in extenuating circumstances, including but not limited to visiting patients and residents receiving end-of-life care.

**Emergency Department and Express/Urgent Care:**

- All patients and family members entering Emergency Departments or Express Care/Urgent Care will be screened upon entry into the facility.
- Anyone presenting with symptoms is required to wear a mask.
- No visitors are permitted with few exceptions:
  - One parent or support person should accompany pediatric patients
  - One consistent support person may be permitted in other rare circumstances such as for a patient with a cognitive impairment or disability who requires assistance to access care
  - Visitation for patients in end of life care (in the ED only)

**Outpatient Clinics:**

- Visitors/family members are not permitted to accompany patients to outpatient visits unless the patient requires support and assistance to access their appointment. Support people providing this level of assistance by accompanying a patient will be screened upon check-in at the clinic.
- One parent or support person should accompany pediatric patients.
- Support people who have respiratory symptoms will not be permitted to enter the clinic and should follow-up with their own healthcare providers.
- Patients who would benefit from other forms of support during a visit (such as a family member to listen, participate in the discussion, etc.) are encouraged to include support people via phone or other technology.

**Other:**

- Visitors to pharmacies who present with any symptoms will be asked to wear a mask and directed to proceed directly to the pharmacy.
- Any approved visitors will be asked to clean their hands upon entry/exit from the building, entry/exit from the unit or clinic and entry/exit from patient rooms.
- Employees may not visit patients either on or off-duty unless they are an approved exception visitor.