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August 6, 2020

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. This replaces the guidance published on June 17, 2020

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 These policies and procedures for visitation shall be in place until amended, rescinded, or by action of the expiration of Executive Order 01-20 and its subsequent Amendments.

Agency of Human Services

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

Family members and loved ones play a key role in supporting and comforting those who are sick and ill, however, as the state seeks to prevent the spread of COVID-19, AHS is making temporary changes to Visitor/Welcoming policies to protect the health of both employees and patients.

**To protect the health of both the workforce and patients, AHS is providing the following requirements for all hospitals throughout Vermont:**

### **For All Visitors Entering a Hospital, Hospitals shall:**

- Restrict entrances into all medical buildings and clinics. Everyone who enters any facility be asked the purpose of their visit to the medical center.
- Implement entry control points in their hospitals to enable the screening of all individuals entering their facilities.
- Develop and implement a written process to screen all visitors intending to enter facility.
- Screen all visitors for COVID-related symptoms prior to visitors entering the facility. Visitors who are symptomatic shall be prevented from entry.
- Require all visitors to be masked and maintain a face and nose covering for the entirety of the visit. Visitors are permitted to wear a mask of their own but shall be provided a mask by the hospital if one is needed.
- Implement a process for tracking the visitors associated with each patient and implement access control for visitation to the patient.
- Develop guidelines for the conduct of visitors including:
  - Direction to remain in the patient's room for the duration of the visit; and,
  - Limiting traffic in hallways and avoid congregating in waiting rooms, cafeterias and lobbies before, after or between visits.
- Prohibit visitors from visiting patients suspected of having COVID-19 or have tested positive for COVID-19. Every effort should be made to support patient and family interaction by deploying the use of technology.
- Restrict all hospital volunteer programs from sending volunteers into any facility with the exception of certified birth doulas.
- Endeavor to support patient and family interaction by deploying the use of telecommunications technology
- Require visitors to pharmacies who present with any symptoms to wear a mask and be directed to proceed directly to the pharmacy.

- Require approved visitors to clean their hands upon entry/exit from the building, entry/exit from the unit or clinic and entry/exit from patient rooms.
- Restrict employees from visiting patients either on or off-duty unless they are an approved exception

**For Patients in Inpatient/Acute Care and Emergency Department and Express/Urgent Care:**

- One visitor at a time is permitted except:
  - Two parents or one parent and one visitor for pediatric patients.
  - One additional and consistent support person may be permitted in circumstances such as for a patient who requires assistance to access care or assistance in providing detailed medical history.
  - Visitation for patients in end of life care will be managed by their care team. One support person will be welcomed when a patient transitions to comfort measures. No more than two family members at one time may be permitted in the patient room at the end of life.
  - For dual occupancy rooms, visitor presence will be dependent on the space available and the needs and preference of both patients.

**For Patients in Outpatient Clinics:**

- No visitors are permitted except:
  - Visitors/family members are permitted to accompany patients to outpatient visits if 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 additional and consistent support person may be permitted in circumstances such as for a patient who requires assistance to access care or assistance in providing detailed medical history.
  - Visitors or support people who have respiratory symptoms will not be permitted to enter the facility and should follow-up with their own healthcare providers.
  - Two parents, or one parent and visitor may, accompany pediatric patients.
  - For patients who would benefit from other forms of support during a visit (such as a family member to listen, participate in the discussion, etc.), every effort should be made to support patient and family interaction by deploying the use of technology.

**SUSPENSION OF OPERATIONS:**

If the Vermont Department of Health determines that a COVID-19 outbreak has occurred and providers cannot safely care for Vermonters in a way that (1) limits the exposure of patients and staff to COVID-19; (2) preserves PPE and ventilators; and (3) preserves inpatient hospital capacity, it will notify and require all providers in the region to return to the standards set out in Addendum 3 to Executive Order 01-20 issued on March 20, 2020. Depending on the severity of the outbreak, the Vermont Department of Health may require all Vermont providers to adhere to issued guidance.