



## Visitation Policy

- I. Purpose.** The purpose of this *Visitation Policy* (this “Policy”) is to provide guidelines for visitation with regard to general-access visitors and to support persons of a patient with a disability covered by the ADA.
- II. Scope.** This Policy applies to all inpatient units and outpatient testing and procedural departments of Kent Hospital as described in Section V(4) below.
- III. Policy.** It is the policy of Kent Hospital to provide reasonable access to visitors of patients who are admitted to the hospital in an effort to promote the well-being of the patient through appropriate contact with friends and family. Visitation will be allowed under the regulations set forth in this policy which are intended to protect our patients and staff. During times of strict isolation and/or quarantine, visitation to Kent Hospital may be restricted. Kent Hospital will provide *reasonable access* (as defined below) to support persons of an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA.
- IV. Procedure.**
  - (a) Patient Consent/Limitations on Visitation:**
    - 1) Upon admission, each patient is informed of their right to restrict visitation and can at any time amend their visitation status.
    - 2) Visitors may be restricted for the following reasons:
      - i. The patient requests restriction of specific visitor(s)
      - ii. The patient is under the custody of Law Enforcement
      - iii. The patient may be placed at risk by visitors (e.g. infections or abuse)
      - iv. The visitor may be placed at risk by the patient (e.g. infections or violent behavior)
      - v. The presence of a visitor may create a disruption to patient care in the unit or department
      - vi. An emergent situation in the unit or department
  - (b) Granting Access to Visitors vs. Support Person(s) where Patient has a Disability as defined by the ADA:**
    - 1) Patients with disabilities as defined by the ADA may receive visitors outside of routine visitation hours in accordance with ADA and State guidelines.



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- 2) The hospital shall not unreasonably deny entry to support persons of an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA (see Definitions above to determine reasonable access).
  - i. Language barriers will likely constitute the majority of disabilities considered to be covered by the ADA and RIDOH regulations, but if uncertain, contact the Risk Manager on call for clarification.
- 3) If the hospital determines access is reasonable and will be permitted, the hospital must provide accommodations for a patient with a disability so they may be accompanied by the support person(s) (ex: provide SP with appropriate PPE).
- 4) SP's must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
- 5) The hospital *may* permit up to two (2) SP's with the patient with disabilities at any given time.

(c) **Infection Control Provisions**

- 1) If a visitor has a fever, flu-like symptoms or other symptoms of infection, or admits to a known exposure to others with infectious illness, they are encouraged to delay coming to the hospital until their symptoms resolve.
- 2) Confirmed or suspected COVID patients are permitted limited visitation on a case-by case basis. Visitors of COVID positive patients must sign a COVID waiver (see Attachment A) and wear an N95 mask when they are in the patient's room.
- 3) In the event of a community outbreak of other communicable diseases, visitation restrictions may occur.
- 4) Where there is a precaution/isolation sign outside of the patient's room, visitors are instructed to speak with the nurse caring for the patient regarding the appropriate personal protective equipment they will need to do so before entering the room.
- 5) Visitors are encouraged to use hand sanitizer before entering and when exiting a patient's room to prevent transfer of infection.
- 6) Staff are encouraged to instruct visitors about the use of good cough etiquette while on the hospital campus.

(d) **Visiting Hours:**

- 1) General Inpatient Floors, including Women's Care Post-Partum Unit: 8 am – 8 pm
- 2) Intensive Care Unit: 4 pm – 8 pm



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- 3) Emergency Department: Open, 1 visitor and/or support person at bedside with limitations as outlined below
- 4) Cath Lab: Open, 1 visitor may accompany patient in the pre- and post-procedural areas where presence will not disrupt patient care.
- 5) Surgical Services: 1 visitor may accompany patient in the pre- and post-procedural areas where presence will not disrupt patient care.

(e) **Department Specific Visitation Guidelines**

1) **Emergency Department**

- i. One visitor and/or support person, is allowed to accompany a patient admitted to the Emergency Department or admitted under ED Inpatient status.
- ii. If it is determined that there would be no detrimental effect on hospital operations, two visitors or support persons *may* be permitted to visit at once.
- iii. Special Considerations:
  - a. One parent or primary guardian of a pediatric patient is allowed.
  - b. Exceptions for more than one visitor may be made where the patient is at end of life.

2) **Women's Care Center/ Labor & Delivery**

- i. OB patients may have a birth coach, a pre-designated doula and/or one SP present while in labor
- ii. Visitors are instructed to identify themselves at the main desk and to receive clearance for visitation.
- iii. Visitors must scrub their hands per protocol before visiting.
- iv. The patient may have no more than four visitors, aged 14 and above
- v. Parents or significant others are welcome to visit 24 hours per day and may stay overnight to bond with and assist in caring for the neonate
- vi. Siblings of a newborn are permitted to visit with limitations:
  - a. Siblings must be free of symptoms of communicable disease and be up to-date on all immunizations as verified by the parent
  - b. Siblings must be accompanied by another adult visitor and are not permitted to be alone in the room with the newborn or stay overnight



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3) **Intensive Care Unit**

- i. The recommendation for visitation in the Intensive Care Unit is to allow two immediate family members/significant others to visit at one time.
- ii. Food and drink intended for patients or visitors are not recommended.
- iii. Visitors 14 years of age and older are welcome.
- iv. Visitation may be restricted or suspended in the event that a patient is placed on strict isolation/quarantine, or when visitation may preclude the safe delivery of patient care.

4) **Placeholder**

(f) **Exceptions to this Policy:**

- 1) Contact the Risk Manager on call to discuss whether an exception applies. The on-call RM is available via AMS, Call Center or AMION.
- 2) Exceptions may be made for extenuating circumstances, such as end of life. These must be approved by the Nursing Supervisor. The Administrator on Call (AOC) will also be available for consultation.

V. **Definitions.** Terms not already defined in this Policy have the following meanings:

- (a) **Visitor:** a person identified to have a wish to spend time with a patient receiving services at Kent Hospital. A person classified as a Visitor would not be considered essential in facilitating communication or other life functions of a patient at Kent Hospital. Any person wishing to spend time with a patient *who does not have a disability under the ADA as defined below* would be considered a Visitor, as opposed to a Support Person.
- (b) **Support person (SP):** a person identified to be essential to the care of a patient with a disability, including patients who have altered mental status, communication barriers, or behavioral concerns (such as patients with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD), dementia, or behavioral health needs. The SP can also be considered essential if they are instrumental in supporting the patient with crucial conversations. The SP must be 18 years of age or older. The SP must consent to and be able to tolerate wearing a mask and/or other PPE as indicated, continuously during the visit.
- (c) **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** A Federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities. The ADA is primarily applied to allegations of discrimination with regard to employment discrimination, physical access/mobility and language barrier issues. Health



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care organizations that provide services to the public are covered by the ADA under Title III, relating to places of public accommodation.

- (d) **Reasonable access:** with regard to providing access to an SP, “reasonable access” is that access to a patient by a support person which is essential to the safe care of, treatment of, or communication with a patient who has a physical or psychological disability covered by the ADA.
  - 1) TEST #1: Under the statute, it would be “unreasonable” to deny access to the support person if the patient would not be able to communicate or have equal access to safe, effective care without the presence of the support person.
- (e) **Disability:** defined by the ADA as a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits at least one major life activity.

#### **REFERENCES:**

RIDOH Covid-19 Visitation Policy July, 2020; CDC. Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic. June 19, 2020; Spubler, V. (2008) Review of Literature on Visiting Hours in the Intensive Care Unit, Institute of Healthcare Improvement



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