

Policy Number: **RI.01-001**  
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Reviewed:

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**Subject/Title: Patient Visitation Policy**

**Policy:** Oneida Healthcare promotes and supports a patient and family centered approach to care. We recognize the importance of allowing family members and other individuals to be present with a patient for emotional support during the course of their stay. Most patients and families require assistance and support from people that are important to them. Wherever possible, we recognize and honor patients' wishes regarding visitation. The Health Center allows for the presence of a support individual of the patient's choice, unless the individual's presence infringes on others' rights, safety, or is medically or therapeutically contraindicated. The individual may or may not be the patient's surrogate decision-maker or legally authorized representative. Consideration will be given for visits outside of the normal visiting hours on a case-by-case basis. This policy will outline not only visitation guiding principles but also department and unit specific visitation guidelines

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to define and set expectations and guidelines regarding persons visiting hospitalized patients and to recognize 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, socioeconomic status, religion, marital status, citizenship, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and/or other legally protected classification. Oneida Healthcare wants to ensure that each patient and visitor is treated equally with respect and dignity and with an appreciation for the family's lifestyle, customs, language and culture.

**Definitions:**

**Family or Family Member:** The terms "family" or "family member" are understood and interpreted to include any person(s) who plays a significant role in an individual's socio-emotional life. This may include a person(s) not legally related to the individual. Members of "family" may include spouses, domestic partners, and both different-sex and same-sex significant others. "Family" may include a minor patient's parents, regardless of the gender of either parent. Solely for purposes of visitation policy, the concept of parenthood is to be liberally construed without limitation as encompassing biological parents, legal parents, foster parents, same-sex parents, step-parents, those serving in loco parentis, and other persons operating in caretaker roles, consistent with applicable law.

**Visitor:** A "visitor" is defined as a guest of the patient. Family members are considered to be visitors as well. Visitors are encouraged to visit during the hospital designated visitation hours of 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Due to the critical and/or specialized nature of certain units (i.e., intensive care units, recovery rooms, emergency departments, Labor and Delivery etc.), visiting may be more restrictive.

## General Guidelines:

1. In general, family members and visitors are welcome from 10 am to 8 pm daily, unless one or more of the following considerations are noted, or other special circumstances apply as described in this policy.

The patient or the patient's designated representative, in conjunction with the registered nurse and healthcare team, may make visitation limitations. Family and visitors will not be denied access to the patient without a legitimate reason, as determined by the hospital. Special considerations that determine the amount of time family and visitors spend with the patient include:

- Clinical and emotional needs of the patient. Having family or visitors present must not put the patient at risk or bring the patient harm. Examples include exhaustion, overstimulation, or marked increase in agitation.
  - Family member's or visitor's inability to meet hospital infection control policies.
  - The need to maintain a sterile environment during bedside procedures.
  - A limitation as requested by the patient or patient's designated representative.
  - Space limitations in patient rooms.
  - Patient, family, visitor or employee safety issues.
  - Visitors or family members with prohibitive legal documentation, such as applicable restraining orders, will not be allowed to visit.
2. To help patients recover and to not overly tire patients, visits should be brief, quiet and pleasant. The patient or patient's designated representative, in conjunction with the registered nurse and healthcare team, may make additional limitations for family and visitors, especially in the intensive care units.
  3. Children should always be accompanied by an adult other than the patient. Visits by children younger than 13 years of age should be coordinated with the patient's registered nurse and the patient or patient's designated representative. Children can only visit if they are able to comply with all isolation and/or infection control precautions.
  4. There may be unique and extenuating circumstances (i.e., imminent death, impending surgery, etc.) that require compassionate exceptions to these guidelines. The registered nurse and the health care team, using professional judgment and in collaboration with the patient or the patient's designated representative, will consider the unique family circumstances and patient needs when applying these guidelines. In these circumstances, to the greatest extent feasible, family will be allowed brief visits.
  5. In special situations, an adult family member may spend the night with the patient if the patient is in a single room, space is adequate and the presence of the family member contributes to the well being of the patient. The family member must be able to safely stay alone and take care of their own needs. Children may not remain overnight in a patient room. For pediatric patients, one parent is allowed to stay. Overnight guests should remain in the patient's room and inform staff if they need to leave the room for any reason.
  6. Patients in police custody and/or correctional services custody (inmates) will not be permitted to have visitors unless approved by the Department of Corrections.
  7. Family and visitors are expected to abide by conduct supportive of the hospital environment. Family or visitors may be asked to leave the premises if they become disruptive or interfere with the general comfort and care of the patients, visitors, or staff. Hospital security will be notified to handle disruptive issues as needed.

8. Family or visitors may not consume alcohol or illegal drugs while on the hospital campus.
9. Family or visitors may not smoke while on the Oneida Healthcare Campus.
10. In the interest of patient and staff privacy, Photography and Videography are not permitted in most areas with the exception of the OB unit and Extended Care Facility and Rehabilitation Center.
11. In the event of a Hospital, Extended Care Facility and Rehabilitation Center or Community outbreak of infectious disease, i.e. seasonal influenza, it may be necessary for OHC in coordination with the local health department and New York State Department of Health to restrict visitation or impose limited visitation based on other criteria (visitors age, etc). At times, we may be forced to close to visitors.
12. Family and visitors should check with staff before entering the unit.
13. Family and visitors should always wash hands each time they enter and leave the patient room or unit.
14. Family and visitors should follow all isolation and/or infection control pre-cautions as instructed by nursing staff.
15. Family and visitors are asked not to come to the hospital if they are feeling ill or have signs of, or have recently been exposed to, communicable illnesses or infections for our patient's protection. Hospital personnel reserve the right to ask family and visitors to leave if they show signs of illness.
16. To maintain the privacy of other patients, family and visitors should only enter the room of the patient that they are there to spend time with. Family and visitors are requested to remain in the patient's room while visiting the patient.
17. To maintain patient privacy and minimize disturbances to other patients and families, congregating outside in the hallways is prohibited.
18. To facilitate the rest and recovery of all patients, family members and visitors should be mindful and sensitive to the needs of other patients and families by keeping noise and disturbances to a minimum. Hallways should be kept clear.
19. Family and visitors must not interfere with normal hospital and/or Extended Care Facility and Rehabilitation Center operations.
20. Family and visitors should check with nursing prior to bringing in any food or beverages for the patient.
21. Patient privacy and confidentiality must be considered and maintained.

**Intensive Care Units:**

1. Family and visitors to ICU patients must first check-in with unit personnel to ensure patient and staff safety as well as patient availability.
2. Due to space limitations, care needs and concerns for a safely controlled environment, family and visitors at the patient's bedside should be limited to two (2) at a time.
3. Family and visitors are requested to remain in the patient's room while visiting with the patient.
4. Children visiting in the Intensive Care Units shall be at the discretion and mutual agreement of the healthcare team, patient and family.
5. Family and visitors are requested to wait in the assigned ICU waiting rooms and use the phone located directly outside the ICU entrance each time they wish to enter the unit.
6. Food and beverages should not be brought in for the patient without first checking with the nursing staff.

7. Family and visitors may be asked to step out of the unit at certain times throughout the day for a variety of reasons.

### **Maternity / Lullaby Center:**

1. Visitors are welcome in Labor and Delivery 24 hours a day. The patient will decide who will visit within the guidelines. Visitors will be limited to two (2) in L&D.
2. The significant other is NOT considered a visitor.
3. **Operating and Recovery Room** patients can have **one (1) support person when the patient has spinal/epidural anesthesia**. Only this one (1) person can visit while the patient is in the OR and RR (No rotating, leaving or reentering).
4. Fathers and Significant others are welcome anytime. For the safety of our babies and mothers, no visitors under the age of 13 are permitted except for siblings of the newborn. Siblings are welcome in the Lullaby Center when accompanied by a responsible adult, other than “Mom” and the main labor support person.

### **Pediatrics:**

1. Given the child’s health and safety needs, Parents are encouraged to be with their children 24 hours a day, to the extent possible, unless otherwise advised by medical or nursing staff. Other family members and friends are encouraged to visit during normal visiting hours of 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. daily.
2. During the sleeping hours, only one parent will be allowed to stay.
3. The hospital cannot be responsible for clothing, toys, special blankets, etc.
4. Individuals under 13 years of age are not allowed to visit.
5. No child “walkers” or scooters will be allowed in the hospital.

### **Emergency Services:**

1. In general, there are no pre-set visiting hours in these areas. However, family and visitors will not be denied visitation without a legitimate reason (e.g., medical reasons, unit activity, or safety/privacy concerns) as determined by the physician and/or unit charge nurse. Oneida Healthcare will facilitate family presence.
2. The length and frequency of visits will be at the discretion of the Nurse Manager/Charge Nurse taking into account the patient’s condition.
3. Every effort will be made to keep the family or appropriate legal decision maker involved in the patient’s care.
4. Every effort will be made to communicate patient information and condition or location updates as appropriate as quickly as possible. The information will be provided to family or appropriate legal decision maker via the physician, nurse and/or social worker.
5. In critical situations, ideally there will be a support person available for the family member at the bedside.

### **Surgical Services: Ambulatory Surgery, Operating Room, Endo, PACU**

In an effort to provide quality patient care, protect our patients and families from potential exposure and transmission of viruses and bacteria, a limited visitation policy for all Surgical Services patients has been instituted.

1. Each Ambulatory or Same Day Surgery patient may be accompanied by two (2) healthy adults. If additional family members or visitors come to the hospital, they will be allowed to wait in the Surgical Waiting Room or cafeteria. Alternate arrangements need to be made for other children in the family.
2. The following exceptions will apply:
  - Children 18 years of age and younger are permitted to have parents/guardians stay with them in the Ambulatory Surgery and holding area of the Operating Room.

- Mentally/emotionally challenged patients or patients with special needs may have family/caregivers at their bedside.
  - If a critical post-op patient is in the PACU, family members may be allowed into the unit. Otherwise only patients aged 10 and younger may be allowed to have visitation.
  - Patients who are in legal/forensic custody will have the appropriate number of enforcement officers present at all times according to the law enforcement agency.
3. At least one parent/guardian is allowed with a child in all Surgical Services departments (except the Operating Room Suites) to the extent possible given the child's health/safety needs. When the parent/guardian cannot be present, it is important to leave a transitional object (favorite possession) with the child.
  4. No visitors will be allowed in the procedure room on the Endo unit.
  5. If the patient is going to remain in the hospital overnight or for an extended period of time, the visitation policy for the unit the patient is on will be in effect.

### **Medical Imaging:**

1. One parent will be allowed in the exam room during a child's exam. If radiation is being used, preferably the parent is not a female of child bearing age.
2. For patients having an Ambulatory Procedure in Radiology, family may accompany the patient but will be asked to wait in the Radiology waiting room during the procedure.
3. Family accompanying ER patients should be limited to two (2) at a time. Unless the Technologist requests assistance with the patient, the family is asked to wait in the designated areas within the Radiology Department.
4. Family members may accompany an Inpatient to the Radiology Department. Depending on the procedure and the length of time of the procedure, one (1) family member may be allowed in the exam room. Any time ionizing radiation is used, the family member must leave the room unless giving assistance to the patient.
5. Any Family member remaining in the exam room during the use of ionizing radiation must follow the NYSDOH rules regarding the wearing of appropriate protective lead aprons/gloves. He/she will be furnished with an individual monitoring device. Pursuant to the NYSDOH rules, the person assisting with the patient must give us their name for our log.
6. For Ultrasound Obstetric exams, preferably no one is allowed in the room until the technical portion of the scan is completed. Two (2) family members may be invited into the room to view the baby after the completion of the exam.

### **Extended Care Facility and Rehabilitation Center**

1. Visitor should sign in and out at the visitors table in the first floor lobby.  
Normal visiting hours are between 9:00 AM and 8:00 PM. Critically ill residents may be visited during these hours by anyone of their choice and other times by adult family members only.
2. Children are welcome, but we must ask that they be accompanied by an adult. We ask that children, and all other visitors, be free of colds or other communicable diseases for residents' sakes and remind visitors that noisy children tire the elderly easily. Short visits by children seem to please the residents best. Children may not wander up and down the halls of the Facility unattended at any time.
3. Please check with the nurse on the resident's before bringing in food or candy. Many of the residents are on a strict diet. Small amounts that do not need storage in a refrigerator are best.
4. Family and friends are welcome to join their resident for visits during activity programs during visiting hours. Programs sponsored by the Activities Department are planned therapeutically for residents and family participation in these programs is encouraged.

5. If there are any infection control precaution signs outside of a resident's room or the facility, visitors should check with the nursing staff regarding any special procedures PRIOR to entering the resident's room.

**Guidelines for Patient Education:**

1. The registered nurse should review the family presence and visitor guidelines with the patient on or shortly after admission so the patient may make choices about family presence and visitor access. If the patient is unable to participate in these discussions and decisions, the patient's designated representative should be involved.
2. The nurse should communicate that the patient, or patient's designated representative, may make changes to their visitation choices at any time.
3. The nurse should discuss the balance between providing support to the patient and allowing the patient sufficient rest and privacy.
4. To the extent possible, the nurse should provide clear expectations about what family members and visitors can do to assist in supporting the patient's care, where they can be on the unit, and any limitations on their participation.
5. When appropriate, the nurse may also discuss the risk of caregiver fatigue with family and visitors.
6. The healthcare team should be flexible in order to respond to the needs and preferences of each patient and because time and treatment alters patients needs and/or wants.
7. In the event that a dispute arises between families or visitors regarding access to or information about patients, the Nurse Manager/Charge Nurse or Nursing Supervisor is to be contacted to assist with resolution.

**References:** CMS Conditions of Participation  
42 CFR §482.13(h) Jan. 18, 2011  
10NYCRR Part 405 Amendment – 405.7  
NYSDOH Patient Bill of Rights  
NYSDOH Parents Bill of Rights

**Standards:** RI.01.01.01 EOP 28 Patient Rights: Hospital respects, protects and promotes patient rights.

**Forms:** Unit Specific Educational Materials (brochures, handouts, etc)  
Patient Services Directory

**Approved by:** Senior Management Team, August, 2014