

Title: **Patient Visitors**

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PURPOSE

EvergreenHealth Monroe (EHM) recognizes the value of family and friends involvement in the healing process. We respect the patient right to designate visitors or restrict/refuse visitors and we strive to ensure that all visitors of patients of EvergreenHealth Monroe enjoy equal visitation privileges consistent with patient preferences and subject to the hospital’s clinical restrictions.

DEFINITIONS

Clinical Restrictions – means any clinically necessary or reasonable restriction or limitation imposed by the hospital on a patient’s visitation rights which is necessary to provide safe care to the patient or other patients. A Clinical Restriction may include, but is not limited to:

- Court order limiting or prohibiting contact
- Behavior presenting a direct risk or threat to the patient, staff, or others
- Behavior that disrupts the patient care unit
- Limitations on the number of visitors at one time
- Patient risk of infection by the visitor
- Visitor risk of infection by the patient
- Patient need for privacy or rest
- During clinical intervention or procedure at health care professional’s discretion

Support Person – means a family member, friend or other individual who is at the hospital to support the patient during the course of the patient admission, and may exercise the patient’s visitation rights on patient’s behalf if patient is unable to do so. Such individual may be, but need not be an individual legally responsible for making medical decisions on the patient’s behalf.

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Title: **Patient Visitors**

POLICY

1. Statement of Patient Visitation Rights

Prior to care being provided, the patient will be informed of his/her rights (or the Support Person will be informed, if appropriate) in writing of:

- Patient's visitation rights
- Patient's right to receive the visitors whom he/she designates, including but not limited to a spouse, a domestic partner (including same sex partner), another family member, or a friend
- Patient's right to withdraw or deny the visitor consent at any time
- Clinical Restrictions that may be imposed on a patient's visitation rights

All visitors designated by the patient (or Support Person) shall enjoy visitation privileges that are no more restrictive than those that immediate family members would enjoy.

2. Selection of Visitors

- The hospital will accept verbal confirmation from a patient of individuals who should be admitted as visitors and individuals who should be denied visitation rights. The information will be recorded in the patient's medical record for future reference.
- In the event the patient is a minor, the legal parent of the minor shall be given the opportunity to verbally designate the individuals permitted to visit the minor patient.

3. Selection of a Support Person

- A patient may verbally designate a Support Person to exercise the patient's visitation rights on his/her behalf, should be patient be unable to do so.
- The legal status of the relationship between the patient and the designated Support Person shall be irrelevant.
- The designation of an individual as the patient's Support Person does not extend to medical decision making.
- In the event the patient is unable to exercise his or her patient visitation rights the hospital will recognize the Support Person's verbal directive as to who should be admitted as visitors of the patient and who should be denied visitation rights.

4. Incapacitated Patients

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Title: **Patient Visitors**

In the event a patient is unable to select visitors due to incapacitation, and the patient has not designated a Support Person to exercise the patient's visitation rights, the hospital may consider the following forms of proof to establish the appropriateness of a visitor or to designate a Support Person for the patient when two or more individuals claim to be the Support Person:

- Advance directive naming the individual as a support person, approved visitor, or designated decision maker (or other written documentation)
- Shared residence
- Shared ownership of a property or business
- Financial interdependence
- Marital/relationship status (parent/child, domestic partnership)

5. Clinical Restrictions on Patient Visitation Rights

The hospital may impose Clinical Restrictions on a patient's visitation rights. When restricting visitation rights, the hospital will explain to the patient (or Support Person, as applicable) the reasons for the restrictions or limitations on visitation rights and how the visitation policies are aimed at protecting the health and safety of all patients.

The hospital will not restrict, limit or otherwise deny visitation privileges on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.

6. Visiting Hours

Hospital visiting hours are not restricted.

Visitors who wish to stay after hospital doors are locked (during night time hours) should discuss their plan with the charge nurse.

Visitors who come to the hospital after hospital doors are locked and enter through the Emergency Department, must check-in at Admitting and be escorted to the patient room by the Administrative Supervisor.

7. Infection Control

Title: **Patient Visitors**

To prevent infection, all visitors are asked to clean their hands before and after visiting a patient. Hand sanitizer is available throughout the hospital. Patients and visitors are encouraged to ask staff, including physicians, if they have washed or sanitized their hands prior to entering the room.

Visitors are requested to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Anyone recently exposed to a communicable disease (chicken pox, measles, whooping cough) should not visit. See Clinical Restrictions on Patient Visitation Rights, above.
- Be respectful of the patient's desire for privacy or rest. See Clinical Restrictions on Patient Visitation Rights, above.
- Food is not always an appropriate gift. Visitors should ask staff about dietary restrictions prior to bringing food or drink to a patient.
- In certain situations it may be necessary for physicians and care providers to facilitate communication and disseminate information to other concerned family members and friends through the patient's representative or support person.

Special Precautions - When a patient is under Droplet or Contact Precautions, visitors will be required to follow strict precautions prior to entering the patient room, i.e., mask, gown, gloves, and follow hand washing practices when leaving the room. See also *Covid-19 Visitor Policy*.

8. Emergency Department

Visitors in the Emergency Department will be asked to wait in the waiting area until the patient has been assessed by the Emergency Department staff. Visitors will be escorted by a staff member to the patient room and are limited to one (1) at a time at the bedside, and may be asked to leave for examinations and/or procedures.

- If a child is the patient, both parents may be in the room.
- Corrections officers remain in the room with the offender. In some circumstances one correction officer stays right inside or outside of the door with a view to the hallway.
- Visitors will be discouraged from standing in doorways and/or sitting in chairs in the doorway or outside the room in the hall, due to safety and confidentiality concerns.

Title: **Patient Visitors**

- Additional visitors may be allowed to a patient in a critical situation.

Depending on the current status of Emergency Department patients, and/or their condition, or in the event of an ongoing situation, it is possible for ED staff to prohibit any visitors in the department, except corrections officers.

9. Balloons

For health and safety reasons, latex balloons are not permitted in the hospital. Mylar balloons are acceptable.

If any patient believes that his or her patient visitation rights have been violated, they may file a complaint by contacting any hospital employee or the Patient Advocate.

See also *Covid-19 Visitor Policy*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CFR 482.13(a) and (b), Hospital Patients' Rights

CFR 482.13 (h), Hospital Patients' Rights

CFR 485.635(f), Patient Visitation Rights