

General Guidance on Visitation for Patients, Escorts, Support Persons and Visitors during COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease-2019)

With the continued decrease in COVID-19 cases in Massachusetts, we are welcoming visitors and escorts to all settings following the conditions below.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- **As of 4/7/2022, BILH is expanding visitation following the conditions below.**
- Please refer to institutional visitor and end of life visitation policies for additional details, including exceptions to guidelines below.
- Please see [Instructions for Screening Patients, Escorts, Support Persons and Visitors for COVID-19](#) for specific screening instructions.

MASKING

- **All visitors, escorts, essential escorts and support persons must wear a BILH-provided surgical mask, fully covering the nose and mouth, at all times while in the healthcare facility regardless of vaccination status.**
- If an individual insists on wearing their own mask, it must be covered by a BILH-provided surgical mask at all times while in the facility.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- **All visitors, escorts, essential escorts and support persons must physically distance when unmasked for eating and drinking while in the healthcare facility regardless of vaccination status.**

DEFINITIONS

VISITORS are Individuals who visit inpatients.

ESCORTS are Individuals who escort patients to ambulatory appointments and procedural areas.

ESSENTIAL ESCORTS are a type of ESCORT for patients with intellectual and/or physical disabilities and accompany the patient to ambulatory appointments and procedural areas. (Note that this may include persons who accompany patients receiving critical information from healthcare personnel, such as a new cancer diagnosis.)

SUPPORT PERSONS

- **Designated support persons** for patients with intellectual and/or physical disabilities may include, but shall not be limited to: an essential escort, a guardian or other legally authorized decision-maker, family member, caregiver, personal care assistant or another disability service provider knowledgeable about the patient's care.
- **Labor/Pregnancy support persons** are those individuals who stay in the Labor & Delivery or antepartum/postpartum patient's room to support pregnancy and childbirth.
- **Designated and labor/pregnancy support persons are not considered visitors.**



GUIDELINES

Inpatients

- Visitors are **not allowed for patients who are COVID-19 Positive or COVID-19 Suspect**. Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- **All other patients may have a maximum of two (2) unique visitors at a time.**
Each facility will determine:
 - Whether to reduce the maximum number of visitors at a time to less than two (2) in either the inpatient setting, the Emergency Department, or both areas
 - Maximum number of visitors permitted per day
 - Maximum duration of each visit
 - Visiting hours
- Visitors to patients in multi-bed rooms may be asked to leave if the overall number of people in the room does not permit adequate physical distancing.
- Overnight visitors are not permitted at this time. Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Visits are strongly discouraged while high risk procedures are being performed in the patient's room.
- **Children under the age of 12 may not visit** unless they are visiting a hospitalized parent or sibling. Exceptions may be considered for special circumstances on a case-by-case basis.
- Visitors must remain in the room with the patient unless otherwise instructed by staff
 - If the visitor must leave the patient, such as during a procedure, they will be directed to the appropriate waiting location as determined by each facility.
 - Visitors may not eat or drink in the patient's room.
- Designated support persons for patients with intellectual and/or physical disabilities should be provided reasonable access to treatment areas as well access to food and bathroom facilities.
- If a designated support person is required, only one (1) person 18 years of age or older is permitted and should be the same individual throughout their stay.

Obstetric Units (Labor & Delivery, Antepartum, Postpartum)

- **Labor & Delivery Units may have up to two (2) support persons during labor and childbirth.** Labor/pregnancy support persons should be 12 years of age or older. If a labor/pregnancy support person is younger than 18 years of age, there must be a second support person present who is over 18 years of age.
- Support persons may eat or drink in the patient's room (while practicing physical distancing) and mask at all other times.
- If a patient requires care in the operating room, a maximum of one (1) support person may be able to accompany the patient, depending on clinical circumstances.
- Labor support persons may remain with the patient as the patient transitions to the postpartum unit. One (1) labor support person may remain with the patient until discharge home. The patient also may have visitors in accordance with the guidance in the *Inpatients* section above.

~Continued on next page~



Ambulatory and Procedural Areas, Emergency Departments, Urgent Care

- **Each patient may have up to two (2) escorts with the specific number to be determined by each facility.**
- Escorts must remain with the patient except when the patient has gone into their surgery or procedure. Appropriate waiting locations to be determined by each facility.
- Children under 12 are not permitted to enter the facility; though exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- As with any person entering the facility, the escort must wear a well-fitting surgical mask at all times.
- Note: Essential escorts are essential to a patient's care and should be permitted even if they report symptoms or exposure to a person with COVID-19, if there is no one else to accompany the patient. Other escorts who are not essential should be restricted from entering the facility. Please see [Instructions for Screening Patients, Escorts, Support Persons and Visitors for COVID-19](#) for specific screening instructions.

Support Persons

- Support persons should be without COVID-19 infection or exposure whenever possible to avoid risk to the patient.
- Individuals with COVID-19 infection or exposure may be support persons *if there is no other support person available*.
 - COVID-19 positive support persons should remain in the patient's room unless required to leave for essential personal errands outside of the hospital, or if requested to do so by staff.
 - Counsel patient about infection risks that the COVID-19 positive support person presents to the patient (if the patient is COVID-19 negative), staff and other patients.
 - COVID-19 negative patients must be cared for in a private room and institute precautions for [COVID-19 Positive status](#) to accommodate the presence of the COVID-19 infected or exposed support person.
- As with any person entering the facility, the designated support person must wear a well-fitting surgical mask at all times.
 - If the designated support person fails to comply with this requirement, staff and local leaders should escalate through their usual chain of command.