



Patient Visitation Policy

Policy Statement

The objective of this policy is to ensure:

1. The visitation rights of Health First patients considering patient preferences, as well as clinically necessary restrictions or limitations.
2. Full and equal visitation privileges for all visitors consistent with patient preferences and facility specifications, as well as patient's children and guests requiring assistance.
3. Allow visitation in compliance with the No Patient Left Alone Act.

Definitions

An advance directive is a written instruction, such as a living will or durable power of attorney for healthcare, recognized under State law and relating to the provision of such care when an individual is incapacitated. Such instruction may include the designation of an individual as a patient's support person for the purpose of exercising the patient's visitation rights.

Clinically necessary restrictions or limitations on patient visitation may be necessary to provide safe care to the patient or other patients, and may be imposed when:

1. There is a court or police order restraining or limiting contact with the patient.
2. The patient is undergoing care interventions.
3. Infection control issues exist.
4. Visitors may interfere with the care of the patient or the care of other patients.

Note: It is impossible to delineate or anticipate every clinical reason that could warrant restrictions or limitations, and Health First reserves the right to determine any other situation where it is necessary to limit visitation.

An essential caregiver is a family member, friend, guardian or other individual designated by the patient. The essential caregiver is not required to provide patient care.

A family member is any person who plays a significant role in an individual's life. Members of family include spouses, domestic partners, both different-sex and same-sex significant others, and a minor's parents regardless of the gender of either parent. *Note: Solely for the purposes of this visitation policy, the concept of parenthood is to be liberally construed without limitation as*



encompassing legal parents, foster parents, same-sex parents, stepparents, those serving in loco parentis, and other persons operating in caretaker roles.

A **minor** is anyone under the age of eighteen (18).

A **support person** could be a family member, friend or other individual who is there to support the patient during the course of the stay and may exercise the patient's visitation rights on his or her behalf if he or she is unable to do so. Such person may be verbally designated by the patient and does not necessarily have to be the same individual who is legally responsible for making medical decisions on the patient's behalf.

A **visitor** is a guest of the patient. All visitors designated by the patient (or his or her support person, where appropriate) shall enjoy visitation privileges that are no more restrictive than those that immediate family members would enjoy, regardless of whether the visitors are legally related to the patient.

Provisions

- A. A patient may designate a visitor who is a family member, friend, guardian or other individual as an essential caregiver. The essential caregiver is not required to provide clinical care to the patient.
- B. Health First will allow in-person visitation by the essential caregiver for a minimum of two (2) hours daily in addition to any other visitation deemed to be appropriate. In-person visitation will be allowed in the following circumstances, unless the patient objects:
 - 1. End-of-life situations
 - 2. A patient who was living with family before being admitted to the hospital and is struggling with the change in environment and lack of in-person family support.
 - 3. Patient is making one (1) or more major medical decisions.
 - 4. Patient is experiencing emotional distress or grieving the loss of a friend or family member who recently died.
 - 5. Patient needs cueing or encouragement to eat or drink which was previously provided by a family member or caregiver.
 - 6. Patient who used to talk and interact with others is seldom speaking.
 - 7. Childbirth, including labor and delivery
 - 8. Pediatric patients



C. Health First will allow patients to have unrestricted private communication, including receiving and sending unopened correspondence, access to a telephone and visiting with any person of his or her choice, at any time between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. at a minimum.

D. Upon request, Health First will make provisions to extend visiting hours for caregivers and out-of-town guests.

E. Health First shall not restrict, limit or otherwise deny visitation privileges on the basis of age, race, color, ethnicity/national origin, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression.

F. This policy supersedes any department specific policy that may be more restrictive.

G. Hospital Administrators (or their designee) and non-hospital Directors (or their designee) are responsible for ensuring Health First associates adhere to the Patient Visitation Policy and Patient Visitation Procedure.