

Administrative Policies and Procedures

Family and Visitor Guidelines

Policy Number: 85-6
Department / Section: Patient Care Services
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POLICY PURPOSE:

To promote a healing environment in which patients, healthcare professionals, staff, families and visitors work together to improve the health of patients with minimal risk of infection or injury. Families and patients' support systems have a significant impact on response to health and illness; therefore, patient/family contacts are encouraged and promoted as frequently as possible. To help ensure safety and to reduce the risk of infection, the healthcare professional may determine that patient care areas are unsafe or otherwise inappropriate for visitors or children (Children generally refers to individuals less than 12 years of age or requiring child care in attendance.)^[1] Patients, and their surrogate decision-makers where applicable, also have the right to restrict their own visitors from inpatient rooms, exam rooms or treatment/procedure areas.

Our Goals:

- Meet the needs of our patients and families for support, comfort and care when the presence of family and friends are most desired.
- Identify unsafe and otherwise inappropriate areas for children and other visitors.
- Reduce the risk of infection by identifying and limiting exposure.

^[1]May also apply to developmentally delayed adults.

POLICY:

To optimize care and to help ensure the safety and privacy of patients, this policy defines the guidelines for family and visitors of UW Medical Center patients. This includes non-pediatric patients receiving outpatient, inpatient or ancillary services.

Guidelines:

I. SAFE ENVIRONMENT

- a. It is the responsibility of UW Medical Center to help ensure as safe an environment as possible for our patients and their visitors. At the discretion of health care personnel, visitors may be asked to wait in the reception area or be provided additional instructions based on patient needs, equipment, treatment and procedural safety rules. In collaboration with UWMC Public Safety, visitation privileges may be revoked if visitors present danger or undue disruption to patients, staff or other visitors.
- b. Procedure and therapy clinics may have additional policies limiting visitors accompanying patients.
- c. While we understand that our patients have family responsibilities, we do not recommend that children accompany patients to clinic visits, treatments or procedures. If children must accompany parent-patients, the following conditions are required:

- i. For the safety of all, children must be accompanied by and closely supervised by a responsible person (A responsible person will generally be an adult (age 18 or older), but depending on circumstances may be an older teenager) while they are visiting in the medical center or a clinic.
 - ii. Patients/parents are asked to carefully watch their children to prevent any safety issues and to avoid disturbing other patients and families. Patient-parents are encouraged to designate a responsible person to supervise their children while they receive care. If this is not possible, care may need to be rescheduled (see below). Responsibility for the child's behavior and safety rests with the parent and/or the parent's designee. UWMC staff does not provide child care services or supervision of children who accompany or visit patients.
 - iii. Children visiting patients on an inpatient unit are restricted to the patient's room or in the unit waiting area. They must be accompanied and supervised by a responsible person at all times.
 - iv. Children accompanying patients to clinic visits should be supervised by a responsible person in the reception area.
 - 1. The patient will be asked to bring a childcare provider if a child must be brought to the patient's appointment or procedure.
 - 2. Patients should be advised that their clinic visit or procedure may need to be rescheduled if patient's care is delayed or disrupted by the behavior of an unsupervised child.
 - 3. During scheduling, staff will advise patients that childcare is not available on-site nor provided by staff.
 - v. Some areas, such as surgical/recovery areas, PT, OT, diagnostic areas, and exercise training centers may be inappropriate for children and/or may have additional guidelines.
 - vi. Waiting areas are reserved for those accompanying patients to that clinic or department.
 - vii. Patients accompanied by disruptive children may need to have their care rescheduled.
- d. Patients may choose to be accompanied to UW Medical Center by a supportive responsible person:
- i. The medical center recognizes that family members and friends can be an important part of the healthcare team. Responsible friends/family members are encouraged to accompany a patient provided that it does not create an unsafe environment or undue distraction.
 - ii. Visitors must be in the medical center for a clinic visit, specific appointment, legitimate business purpose, or to visit a patient.
 - iii. Visitation privileges are not restricted, limited, or denied on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability. All visitors enjoy full and equal visitation privileges consistent with patient preferences.
 - iv. Each patient has the right, subject to his or her consent to receive visitors whom he or she designates, including, but not limited to a spouse, domestic partner (including same sex domestic partner), another family member or a friend provided that it does not interfere with the delivery of care and the provision of a reasonably safe and secure environment. The patient may withdraw this consent at any time. Any restrictions on visitation are fully explained to the patient and/or family.
 - v. For the purpose of this policy the term "family" includes but is not limited to spouses, domestic partners and both different sex and same sex significant others. Family also includes a minor patient's parents, regardless of the gender of either parent. For the purpose of this policy, the concept of parenthood is to be liberally construed without limitation as encompassing legal parents, foster parents, step parents, those serving in loco parentis and other persons operating in caretaking roles.
 - vi. UW Medical Center has a zero tolerance policy for any act or threat of violence of any kind, or any

disruption to medical center activities. Safe and appropriate conduct is expected of all visitors. Staff may contact Public Safety (UWMC Pacific: 598-5555 / Roosevelt: 598-5700) if visitors or family members present safety or security concerns.

- vii. During scheduling, staff will identify and communicate when a responsible person is required to be in attendance to accompany patient post-procedure.

II. REDUCE RISK OF INFECTION:

- a. Visitors who have signs and symptoms of illness should avoid the medical center. Illnesses such as colds, flu, respiratory illness, GI disturbance, etc are highly contagious. If key family members or visitors must be in attendance for patient safety/support, staff will instruct individuals in required infection control precautions (such as mask, gloves, hand hygiene).
- b. Visitors recently exposed to any communicable disease such as chicken pox, herpes, measles, viral hepatitis are not allowed to visit the medical center until illness or risk is resolved.
- c. Visitors who have received oral polio vaccine within the past month may not visit transplant recipients or cancer patients on chemotherapy
- d. During community outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases, non-immunized children will not be permitted to visit specific areas where high-risk patients are treated.
- e. Please refer to Policy 5-35 Animals in the University of Washington Medical Center for additional information regarding Service animals, pets, and Therapy animals.
- f. Exceptions to these guidelines must be approved by the supervising physician and the epidemiologist or the medical director. Exceptions must not put other patients or staff at risk of contracting an infection.

III. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR INPATIENT UNITS:

- a. Visiting Hours 5:30 AM to 9:30 PM. For security purposes, family and visitor entry access to the Medical Center is limited to the main lobby entrance prior to 5:30 AM. and after 9:30 PM.
- b. Everyone who enters the UW Medical Center after 9:30PM and before 5:30AM must stop at the Information Desk on the 3rd floor and obtain a visitor ID.
- c. Although we encourage quiet at all times, quiet hours are observed from 9:00PM to 7:00AM. During these hours we ask that any electronic devices are on vibrate, voices are lowered and that every attempt is made to keep all noise levels at low levels and respectful of patients who are sleeping.
- d. A family member or visitor is encouraged to stay with the patient in his/her room if requested by the patient
 - i. Pediatric Patients: Parents are encouraged to remain with the child during hospitalization to provide comfort and emotional support to the child.
 - ii. The nursing staff will assess each situation and will support and advocate for the wishes and desires of the patient. The nurse will partner with the patient and family in determining whether an overnight stay is needed or desired, and provide linens, as needed.
 - iii. Check with your loved one's nurse before a child comes to visit.
 - iv. A minor child can not be left alone in the care of an inpatient. A child must be supervised by an adult other than the patient.
- e. Staff may direct family and visitors to use public restrooms located on each floor and obtain food/beverages from various locations throughout medical center.
- f. Social Work department is available to assist with family housing or emergency childcare needs (www.uwmcpatientfamilyhousing.org).