

NOTICE

This policy is temporarily superseded by the following COVID-19 policy:

[Visitor Restriction Policy Inpatient Setting](#)

University of Washington Medical Center	
DEPARTMENT: Patient Care Services Public Safety	DOCUMENT TYPE: APOP
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APPROVED BY: Assistant Administrator, UWMC Chief Nursing Officer, UWMC Medical Director	

APOP: Family and Visitor Guidelines

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To optimize care and to help ensure the safety and privacy of patients, this policy defines the guidelines regarding the presence and participation of family and guests of UW Medical Center patients. This includes all patients receiving outpatient, inpatient, or ancillary services. Additional departmental guidelines may apply.

DEFINITIONS:

1. **Family:** 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, stepparents, those serving in loco parentis and other persons operating in caretaking roles.
2. **Visitor** is defined as a guest of the patient.
3. **Minor child** under the age of 12 must be within arm’s reach of a responsible person at all times. A **minor child aged 12 to 16** should not be left alone in the care of an inpatient.
4. **Responsible person:** is an adult (age 18 or older) who is not the patient.
5. **Disruptive persons:** are defined as those who place patient, family, friends, staff, persons, or facilities at risk and infringe upon others’ rights and/or safety.

POLICY:

UW Medical Center welcomes patients’ family and friends every hour of every day, according to the patient’s preference, with the exception of the Geropsychiatric Center, which has visiting hours daily from 1 pm - 2:30 pm and 6 pm - 7:30 pm.

1. **GENERAL GUIDELINES**
 Patients may choose to be accompanied to UW Medical Center by a supportive responsible adult:
 - a. The medical center recognizes that family members and friends are an important part of the healthcare team and can be partners in care. Responsible friends/family members are encouraged to accompany a patient provided that their presence does not create an unsafe environment or undue distraction. Patient care staff must be able to access the patient on all sides of the bed in case of emergency or disaster, such as earthquake, which may limit the number of overnight guests depending on space.
 - b. Visitors to the medical center must be in the medical center to visit a patient, for a clinic visit, specific appointment, or legitimate business purpose.
 - c. 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.

- d. The patient has a right to determine which visitors are welcome, and this can change over the course of treatment. The medical center staff will endeavor to support these decisions, knowing that our nursing units are open.
- e. Safe and appropriate conduct is expected of all visitors. Staff may contact Public Safety (UWMC Montlake: 598-5555 / UWMC Northwest: 668-2795 / Roosevelt: 598-5700) if visitors or family members present safety or security concerns. See attached [Family and Visitor Behavior Guidelines](#) for more information.
- f. No staff, patients or visitors should be photographed without their consent.
- g. During scheduling, staff will identify and communicate when a responsible adult is required to be in attendance to accompany the patient post-procedure.

2. SAFE ENVIRONMENT

It is the responsibility of UW Medical Center to help ensure as safe an environment as possible for our patients, their families, friends and our staff. At the discretion of healthcare 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.

3. PRESENCE OF CHILDREN

Children are welcome to visit their loved ones at UWMC. We have guidelines to protect the safety of the children, as well as patients:

- a. Patients/parents must watch their children at all times to prevent any safety issues and to avoid disturbing other patients and families.
- b. Responsibility for the child's behavior and safety rests with the parent and/or the parent's designee. UWMC staff does not provide childcare services or supervision of children who accompany or visit patients.
- c. Entrance to rooms with isolation precautions may not be appropriate.
- d. Outpatient: 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:
 - For the safety of all, children must be accompanied by and closely supervised by a responsible person other than the patient while they are visiting in the medical center or a clinic.
 - If this is not possible, care may need to be rescheduled.
 - Some areas, such as surgical/recovery areas, rehabilitation therapy areas (PT, OT) diagnostic areas, and exercise training centers may be inappropriate for children and/or may have additional guidelines.
- e. Inpatient: Children visiting patients on an inpatient unit are restricted to the patient's room or the unit waiting area at all times. They must be accompanied and supervised by a responsible person other than the patient.
 - An unaccompanied minor child under the age of 12 cannot be left alone in the care of an inpatient. A child must be supervised by a responsible adult other than the patient and be within arm's reach of that adult.

- An unaccompanied minor child (aged 12-16) should not be left alone in the care of an inpatient. There may be exceptions, made on a case by case basis, taking into consideration cultural issues, family history and maturity of the minor child.
- Please engage Social Work as early as possible to do an assessment of the unaccompanied minor to ensure the needs of the patient and the needs of the minor child are adequately met. Social Work and the Nurse Manager will develop a care plan to communicate with the care team shift to shift. If the care plan is inadequate or becomes inadequate to ensure the needs of the patient and the minor child, Social Work, the Nurse Manager, and the AOC will meet to discuss alternatives for the supervision for the minor child. Social Work is available to assist with family housing or emergency childcare need.

4. REDUCE RISK OF INFECTION

All partners in care and any guest of a patient must be free of communicable diseases and must respect UW Medical Center's infection prevention and control policies.

- 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 friends must be in attendance for patient safety/support, staff will instruct individuals in required infection control precautions (such as mask, gloves, and hand hygiene).
- 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.
- Visitors who have received oral polio vaccine within the past month may not visit transplant recipients or cancer patients on chemotherapy.
- During community outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, non-immunized children will not be permitted to visit specific areas where high-risk patients are treated.
- Exceptions to these guidelines for reducing the risk of infection must be approved by the attending physician and the epidemiologist or the medical director. Exceptions must not put other patients or staff at risk of contracting an infection.
- For more information, see policy, [Precautions: Standard and Expanded](#) (search for word "visitors").

5. AFTER HOURS GUIDELINES FOR INPATIENT UNITS:

For security purposes, family and visitor entry access to:

UWMC Montlake is limited to the main lobby entrance prior to 5:30 AM and after 7:30 PM. All non-staff who enter after 7:30 PM and before 5:30 AM must stop at the Information Desk on the 3rd floor and obtain a visitor ID.

UWMC Northwest is restricted to the Emergency Department entrance prior to 6:00 a.m. and after 8:00 p.m. Persons entering during this timeframe may be asked to sign in with Public Safety in the ED in an effort to monitor traffic into the hospital.

6. CULTURE OF QUIET

- 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 at low levels and respectful of patients who are sleeping.
- Additional quiet times are observed and may vary by department.
- To maintain a quiet environment, visitors are asked to spend time in the patient's room, or family room/waiting room, and to avoid congregating in hallways or at the nurses' station.

7. OVERNIGHT VISITORS

UWMC values family presence. A family member or friend is encouraged to stay with the patient in his/her room if requested by the patient.

- a. Pediatric Patients: Parents are encouraged to remain with the child during hospitalization to provide comfort and emotional support to the child.
- b. 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.
- c. Staff may direct family and visitors to use public restrooms located on each floor and obtain food/beverages from various locations throughout medical center.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- See department- and unit-specific visitor guidelines.
- [APOP: Visitor ID Policy](#)
- For further reference on visitation and infection control, please refer to the Infection Control website and the policy, [Precautions: Standard and Expanded](#) (search for word “visitors”)

ATTACHMENT:

[Family and Visitor Behavior Guidelines](#)

REVIEW/REVISION DATES:

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