



March 27, 2020

Health Advisory: COVID-19 Guidance for Hospital Operators Regarding Visitation Updated Guidance regarding Obstetrical and Pediatric Settings

On March 18, 2020, the New York State Department of Health issued a health advisory, available on the Department's COVID-19 website, <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/03/covid19-hospital-visitation-guidance-3.18.20.pdf>, regarding hospital visitation restrictions. Effective immediately, hospitals are to suspend all visitation, except when medically necessary or essential to the care of the patient or for family members or legal representatives of patients in imminent end-of-life situations.

On March 21, 2020, the Department issued an updated guidance specific to obstetrical and pediatric settings. This health advisory replaces that guidance in order to clarify that the visitation policy **requires** hospitals to allow one support person in labor and delivery settings if the patient so desires and two designated support persons in pediatric settings, provided that only one is present at a time.

For **labor and delivery**, the Department considers **one support person essential** to patient care throughout labor, delivery, and the immediate postpartum period. This person can be the patient's spouse, partner, sibling, doula, or another person they choose. In these settings, this person will be the only support person allowed to be present during the patient's care. This restriction must be explained to the patient in plain terms, upon arrival or, ideally, prior to arriving at the hospital. Hospital staff should ensure that patients fully understand this restriction, allowing them to decide who they wish to identify as their support person.

For **pediatric patients**, the Department considers **one support person at a time as** essential to patient care in the emergency room or during hospitalization. For hospitalized pediatric patients, especially with prolonged hospitalizations, the patient or family/caregiver may designate two support people; but only one support person may be present at a time. This restriction must be explained to the patient's family/caregivers in plain terms, upon arrival or, ideally, prior to arriving at the hospital. Hospital staff should ensure that the family/caregiver fully understand this restriction. Individuals age 70 years or older, are not encouraged to be support persons at this time due to increased risk of COVID-19 infection.

Labor and delivery and pediatric patient support persons **must** be asymptomatic for COVID-19 and must not be a suspect or recently confirmed case. Additionally, hospital staff must screen the support person for symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, or shortness of breath), conduct a temperature check prior to entering the clinical area, and every twelve hours thereafter, and screen for potential exposures to individuals testing positive for COVID-19. The support person must stay in the room.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): A gown, gloves and surgical mask should be given to and worn by any designated support person.