

Te Whatu Ora South Canterbury Visitor Policy

This Policy provides the guidance for visiting to support a safe respectful mana enhancing journey through health whilst managing risk to staff, patients and visitors

Purpose

- To provide guidance to members of the community who are visiting patients, or providing support to patients while in our facilities
- To protect staff and patients during seasonal illness surges through ensuring a safe environment for patients, visitors and staff at all times
- To ensure enactment of health and disability commission Code of Rights; Right to support
- To enable access to whānau for patients whilst balancing risk of seasonal illness surges to our people and the risk of harm to patients by not having whanau and support people visit.

Scope

Inclusion

- This policy refers to all Te Whatu Ora facilities providing patient care
- Public visiting patients within inpatient units
- Public accompanying people to community clinics
- Public accompanying people to any outpatient or ambulatory area/clinic
- Public accompanying people presenting at the Emergency Department
- Public accompanying people requiring maternity services
- Non-essential visitors
- This policy is active for as long as an Epidemic Notice under the Epidemic Preparedness Act 2006 remains in force
- This policy references the Health and Safety at Work Act, 2015 by providing a framework to support the mitigation of risk to staff while visitors who meet criteria visit all work place facilities.

Exclusion

Exclusions are limited:

- Exclusions will be considered on compassionate grounds for end of life, or therapeutic care, based on a risk assessment, and ability to mitigate risks at the time. Exclusions will be considered by the Charge Nurse/Midwife Manager (or senior delegate). In such case, staff facilitation of PPE processes must be adhered to, and minimisation of any risk of avoidable transmission. This will be managed on a case-by-case basis
- This policy excludes patients
- This policy excludes duty staff, volunteers and contracted workers performing or providing an essential service
- This policy excludes Partners in care
- Persons providing essential services e.g., interpreters for patients
- Where any service/facility seeks to implement any further exclusions to visitors, the risk assessment and justification to support any exclusions must be competed and shared with the Regional hospital and Specialist Services Director for approval (weekly reviews must be undertaken).

The Hospital & Clinic Patient Visiting Guidance is one of the ways that Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand is minimising the risk of illness surges to patients, staff and the wider community.

When undertaking a risk assessment, the following areas for consideration:

- Currently experiencing demand exceeding capacity in any or all areas such as:
 - Staffing, resourced beds, acute theatre, ED capacity, wait times, and is unable to sustain the pressures, impacting on patient safety, significant care rationing is occurring
 - Known in-hospital transmission occurring
 - IPC or Clinical advice
 - Community transmission rates
 - Localised to an area of facility or blanket district approach.
- Facility ability to limit contagion
 - Ventilation
 - Layout and access routes e.g., door configuration
 - Overcrowding
 - Ability to separate cases and visitors e.g., single or multi room ratios and facility sharing.
- Community and human factors
 - Compliance levels with mask wearing and general precautions
 - Vaccination rates
 - Ability to screen at entry.

Definitions

Visitor: Member of the public not receiving assessment, diagnostics or treatment.

Patient: Member of the public receiving/seeking treatment, this includes mental health service users.

Non-essential visitors: Company representatives, external people attending meetings, people not visiting patients/family/whānau, or people visiting the facilities for a non-clinical reason.

Contractor: an individual or company that provides goods or services.

Kaitiaki/Partner in care: Anyone who provides essential care or support to a patient as part of their health experience. This is inclusive of support person, key contact, carer, parent/child or other whānau who provide an essential support role. This is a trusted person designated by a patient to provide reassurance and advocacy.

Whānau spokesperson: The single point of contact for the whānau.

High risk area: May include but not limited to: Assessment, Treatment and Rehabilitation Unit, Emergency Department (ED), Intensive Care Unit/ (ICU/), Mental Health Inpatient Unit, Maternity ward, Delivery Suite and Transitional care unit inclusive of Neonatal unit, Oncology (including chemotherapy areas), Renal Outpatient and Inpatient areas, or other Outpatient areas who provide care to patients who have high vulnerability.

Partner in care: Anyone who provides essential care needs to a patient as part of their health experience.

Staff Expectations

- Be aware of this policy and elicit outcomes across service
- Escalate visitor policy concerns to your line manager or Duty Nurse Manager (DNM)
- All staff will maintain respectful communication with families/whānau, treating each person with dignity and respect
- All staff will partner with families/whānau, carers and support people regarding this policy
- All staff will work with Māori and Pacific health teams to ensure cultural aspects of care are considered and actioned.

Visitor Expectations

- Respect staff requests to initiate exclusions
- Respect staff and patients by refraining from any disruptive offensive behaviour or verbal abuse
- Maintain infection control principles as instructed, inclusive of physical distancing requirements.

Guiding Principles

There is an expectation that:

- An emphasis is placed on whānau liaison throughout any patients stay
- Alternative means of communication between patients and whānau/families are encouraged and enabled
- Ensure visibility of the expectations on visitors within the facilities including: limitations such as mask wearing and restricting movements within the service to the place the patient resides
- Ensure the visitor policy is not taken in isolation – it is part of a much wider risk assessment associated with the risk of infectious transmission in the organisation and community
- The visitor policy (and future amendments) should take into consideration factors such as the Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand National Guidance, community incidence, workforce levels or other significant incidents such as security threat which require restricted management of visitor access to facilities.

Cultural Considerations

Kaitiaki

Is considered a trusted person designated by a patient to provide assistance, reassurance, advocacy and other support as needed during their health care stay/experience. They are usually a family member, partner, carer or other whānau who facilitate a range of tasks contributing to an enhanced health care experience.

Kaitiaki may:

- Bring in food for patients when visiting. Food brought in for patients should be aligned with the facilities National Healthy Food and Drink Policy and should be checked with a health professional to confirm it is ok for the patient to eat
- Bring other belongings to patients when visiting including clothing, footwear, hearing aids, glasses, dentures, breast milk, digital devices such as mobile phones and charges and other items as needed
- Facilitate specific cultural or religious traditions or rituals for patients as long as there is no impact on other patients related to loud singing, praying or other activities.

All Kaitiaki must access health service facilities through the designated access points and be screened and registered detail. Patients can nominate two registered whānau as their Kaitiaki. During visiting hours two Kaitiaki may provide support. Outside of opening hour, one Kaitiaki may provide care upon arranging with the Charge Nurse Manager or nominated manager.

There is an expectation that Staff will adhere to the vision and values of their respective organisations. This will include:

- Consideration of respect, partnership, cultural sensitivity and equity, and effective communication
- All staff will maintain respectful communication with family/whānau, carers and support person/people, treating each person with dignity and respect

- That staff will be treated with respect and that abuse and aggression toward staff will not be tolerated
- All staff will partner with family/whānau, carers and support person/people regarding this guidance
- All staff will work with Hauora Māori Team/leaders to ensure cultural supports and aspects of care are considered and actioned
- Whānau liaison increases as the response level increases
- Alternative means of communication between patients and whānau/families are encouraged and enabled.
- Changes to this guidance will occur as the environment and science identifies change needed. Any substantial change in direction will follow the usual national engagement process with sign off.

Policy

- All **contractors** and **non-essential** visitors (as define above) are required to sign in at the Supply Department
- **Visitors with COVID-19** are not permitted to visit until 10 days after their positive test result
- **Visitors who are household contacts of COVID-19 positive cases** are required to wear a mask at all times during their visit for 5 days and are recommended to RAT test daily for 5 days
- All visitors are required to comply with infection prevention and control requirements inclusive of:
 - › hand hygiene prior and after visiting patients and hospital facilities
 - › limit their movements within the facility to the service and/or person they are visiting
 - › recommended to wear a medical mask when accessing the healthcare facility (12 years and over). Excluding visitors with a mask exemption. Children under the age of 12 are also encouraged to wear a mask if they are able, an exemption placed on those under the age of 5
 - › maintain safe physical distancing to others
- No pets unless deemed essential for the person –such as service animals
- **Visiting may not be enabled if the infection control requirements are not able to be maintained within the service, for example if the ward they're visiting have an increased prevalence of COVID-19 cases**
- **Visitors will not be required to demonstrate vaccination status or be required to take a RAT to enter.**

Visitors with symptoms:

Visitors with acute respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, sore throat, flu like symptoms) or abdominal pain and diarrhoea must not visit unless an agreed IPC approved plan has been put in place. Those who have been identified as a household contact of a positive COVID-19 case are required to wear a mask at all times during their visit for 5 days.

Visiting a person who is positive of COVID-19:

- Patients who have been admitted with COVID-19 during the active (infective) period of their infection will require more restrictions and will be managed on a **case by case basis** following discussion with the Charge Nurse/Midwife Manager or a senior clinician/manager designated within the DHB who is managing the patient. This is to ensure Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) processes are adhered to, and to minimise any risk of avoidable transmission
- Other methods of communicating with a patient should be facilitated as appropriate, such as Video Conference, Facetime, Zoom, Skype etc
- It is recommended that family/whānau, carers and support person/people must designate a spokesperson who will be the point of contact for the whānau /support people regarding the visiting guidance and any changes to it. Before any visitor can enter an area where there are

COVID-19 positive patients, they must be met by an appropriate staff member who will ensure personal hygiene requirements are met, and Personal Protection Equipment is appropriately worn and explanation of the guidance

- A poster must be placed on the wall at entry points to instruct visitors to maintain good hygiene practices, including wearing masks, hand hygiene on entry and exit. The poster must explain the level of restriction at the time.

To protect our vulnerable people the following actions occur:

- Two visitors per patient at one time (note exceptions below)
- Maintain visitor hours strictly to 1400 – 2000hrs (unless prior arrangement made with the manager of the service)
- All visitors are recommended to wear a medical mask, practice safe physical distancing and hygiene practices. In multi-bed rooms, this may mean the number of visitors is restricted due to space available
- Masks are recommended to be worn for the duration of the visit
- No eating or drinking while in patients' room.

Jean Todd Maternity Unit

- A support person may be present at any time during the inpatient stay and known as a boarder. Boarders must remain in the room and are recommended to wear a medical mask, limit movement through the facility and comply with screening process
- Siblings are permitted within visiting hours.

Maternity Unit Birth Suite:

- One birthing partner and one support person may accompany women in the Birthing Suite
- Partners (or nominated support person) are welcome to support the induction process in its entirety as a boarder. Boarders are recommended to wear a medical mask, limit movement through the facility and comply with screening process
- The Partner is considered part of the mother/pepi unit and entitled to be present as parent of the child once birthed.

All Outpatients Appointments (including Mental Health, Radiology and Medlab)

- ONE support person if required
- Children who accompany a parent, caregiver or sibling to an outpatient appointment are permitted if there are no alternatives to childcare available.

Emergency Department

- TWO support persons ONLY to support people presenting to ED if required.

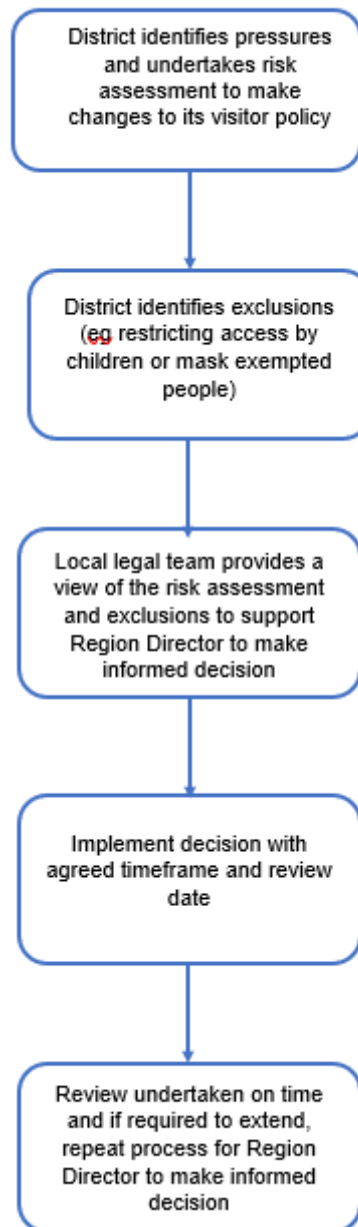
Oncology Medical Unit, Day Patient Services, Pre-Admission Clinic and Endoscopy Unit

- ONE support person per episode of care enabled where physical distancing can be maintained.

Neo-Natal Unit –

- Immediate family visiting only.

Process for exclusions



References:

Te Whatu Ora- Health New Zealand National guidance; hospital & clinic patient visiting guidance during seasonal pressures resulting in surges, draft, 12/09/22

Te Whatu Ora- Health New Zealand National guidance; Kaitiaki; our COVID-19 Partners in care guidance, 22/07/22