

Identifier:	POL-3 - CORP - 3094
Version:	5
Folder:	CORP / POL-GUI-SW

Visitor and Care Partner Presence and Guidelines

Document Owner: Manager of Patient Experience

Purpose: The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance on visitor and care partner presence to ensure Listowel Wingham Hospitals Alliance is providing a safe, secure, and comfortable environment for all.

Listowel Wingham Hospitals Alliance (LWHA) is committed to:

- Involving patient and care partners in the development and review of this policy
- Recognizing the importance of care partner presence during a patient’s hospital stay
- Providing clinical departments, the discretion to limit the number of care partners or visitors based on the needs of the patient, needs of other patients, physical space or extenuating circumstances.
- Protecting the safety of all. LWHA maintains a Zero Tolerance for abuse -see Visitor Code of Conduct for further reference.

Definitions:

Care Partner - any person who provides physical, emotional, or other support to a patient. A care partner is different from a visitor. Most often they are family or close friends of the patient who typically know the patient’s health history, lifestyle, and personal values.

Visitor - a person who is attending the hospital for a social visit with a patient.

Procedure:

Care Partner and Visitor Presence During Low-Risk Periods of Infectious Illness or Outbreaks

1. Visitor and Care Partner presence is based on the condition, care needs and expressed wishes of each patient.
2. Visiting may be balanced, adjusted, or interrupted depending on other needs of patient care including but not limited to timely and effective care, rest and sleep, privacy of the patient or others, safety and security, and/or infection prevention and control (IPAC) guidance. Physical space limitations will also be considered. This may involve limiting the number of visitors per patient at one time.
3. Patients who have pending test results for infectious illnesses or are diagnosed with infectious illnesses, such as COVID-19, may have visitors provided the visitors wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) while visiting. Visitors will be informed of the risk when visiting a patient who has a pending test result or is

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identified to have an infectious illness. When visitors have completed their patient visit, they will remove their PPE and immediately exit the hospital.

4. Visitors and care partners who are feeling unwell, have an infection, have symptoms of respiratory illness, symptoms of flu like illness or communicable diseases should not visit. Visitors with these symptoms will be asked to leave for the protection of vulnerable patients.
5. Visitors and care partners must perform hand hygiene with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub before entering a patient’s room and after visiting a patient.
6. Children (<14 years) as visitors must be directly supervised by an adult, who is not the patient.
7. Visitors will limit their movement within the hospital, only visiting one patient during their visit to an LWHA Hospital.
8. Visitors and care partners are not permitted to use the patient washroom. Public washrooms are available in several areas throughout the hospital.
9. All visitors will follow the masking guidelines in place at the time they visit. Masking guidelines are determined based on local infection rates/trends, guidance from Public Health Ontario and in consultation with IPAC, Huron-Perth Public Health and Regional Partners. Signage at the entrance of the hospital and within the departments will indicate masking measures required. Masks must cover the nose, mouth, and chin at all times. If a visitor is found without a mask, when required, staff will ask them to follow the guidance. If a visitor is repeatedly non-compliant with wearing a mask, visiting privileges will be revoked by any LWHA staff.
 - a. LWHA will ensure masks are available in the main entrances of the hospital and in clinical care areas for patients, care partners and visitors.
 - b. When masking guidelines are in place visitors are not permitted to eat or drink at the patient’s bedside, as this requires removing/lowering of the mask.
 - c. Children under the age of two are not required to wear a mask.
10. Outdoor visits are permitted for patients that can ambulate independently or are able to be transported safely by a care partner. Patients must notify their care team when they are leaving their department for a visit.
11. Alternative guests (e.g. pets and/or animal-assisted therapy) must be pre-arranged with the inter-professional team and the Pet Visiting Policy and Procedure must be adhered to.

Care Partner Presence During High-Risk Periods of Infectious Illness or Outbreak

1. Visting for social purposes is not supported during an outbreak.
2. Care partner presence during an outbreak is permitted based on IPAC outbreak measures, recommendations, and guidance.
3. Care partners will be required to wear PPE, as outlined by the IPAC coordinator and signage posted within the department.

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- a. The care team will provide education to care partners on safe visiting and donning and doffing PPE.
 - b. Care partners not adhering to IPAC measures will be asked to leave the hospital.
4. Individual departments may need to impose restrictions on care partner presence to ensure a safe environment for patients, families, and staff. In the event restrictions are imposed the following will occur:
- a. Care team will communicate restrictions with patients and/or their Substitute Decision Maker(s)
 - b. Care team will attempt to support patients who are isolated from their care partners with virtual visits, telephone calls, and effective referrals to the health disciplines team as needed (Social work, Recreational Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech Language Pathology, Registered Dietitian).
 - c. Departmental leaders and IPAC may approve care partner presence in exceptional circumstances (see special considerations below).
 - i. Consultation with Ethics & the Manager of Patient Experience may be helpful in determining whether a care partner is essential.

Appeals and Complaints

1. Questions or concerns regarding visitor and care partner presence should be directed to the Clinical Nurse Lead (CNL), Team Lead, or department social worker first.
2. Should front line staff be unable to resolve visiting or care partner concerns, they can then escalate these to their department manager. Managers are then encouraged to report this feedback in the RL6 reporting system for tracking (See Management of Patient and Care Partner Feedback policy).
3. In the event concerns persist or should the department manager not be available to assist, these concerns can be escalated to the Manager of Patient Experience.

Special Considerations:

Emergency Department - maximum of two support persons with a patient at one time. Staff have the discretion to limit the number of care partners based on the needs of the patient, needs of other patients, physical space, or extenuating circumstances.

Obstetrics/Labour & Delivery - During High Risk of Infectious Illness or Outbreak care partner(s) may be present with the dyad 24/7. General visiting will not be permitted. Adherence to IPAC guidelines, PPE requirements and masking must be followed.

Patient imminently approaching end-of-life - During High Risk of Infectious Illness or Outbreak the care partner(s) may be present with the patient 24/7. General visiting will also be permitted, but the number of visitors at one time may be limited based on the guidance from IPAC, departmental managers and involvement of the care team. Adherence to IPAC guidelines, PPE requirements and masking must be followed.

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Cross Reference:

- [Management of Patient and Care Partner Feedback Within LWHA](#)
- [Privacy and Confidentiality Requirements for Visitors](#)
- [Pet Visiting](#)
- [Visitor Code of Conduct](#)

References:

- Care Partner Presence -London Health Sciences Centre
- Family & Caregiver Visting Guidelines -Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance
- [Interim Infection Prevention and Control Measures Based on Respiratory Virus Transmission Risk in Health Care Settings 1st Revision: November 2023](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control Tips for Visiting All Health Care Settings Published: February 2023](#)

Committee Approval:

- Patient Partner Council - March 25, 2024
- Leadership - May 7, 2024

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