

DEPARTMENT:

NAME: Visitor Policy for COVID-19

POLICY NUMBER:

ORIGINATOR:

EFFECTIVE DATE:

REVISED DATE(s):

REVIEWED DATE: 10/20, 11/20

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Meritus Health inpatient and outpatient locations.

PURPOSE

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) poses several changes to liberalized family presence, including potential spread to patients and staff by those with asymptomatic or mild infection and increased use of personal protective equipment (PPE), which is in limited supply. Consistent with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Meritus Health is instituting an Enhanced Patient Safety Policy regarding visitation by family and friends to all its properties.

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POLICY

The policy applies to all patients in all Meritus Health facilities. This decision aligns us with other hospitals in Maryland, including Johns Hopkins Medicine and University of Maryland and is consistent with approaches taken by other leading health care institutions nationwide. This serves to both better protect the community and as well the health of our providers and staff.

As preliminary data suggest that younger patients may be more likely to have asymptomatic COVID-19 carriage, as well as known carriage of well-understood respiratory viruses (influenza, RSV, etc.), we have restricted all visitors younger than 18 years old from entering inpatient and ambulatory areas entirely, unless they are the patient or the parent of a pediatric patient.

Meritus Health will follow the Access to Support for Patient with Disabilities in Health Care Settings notice issued by the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Disabilities to adopt visitation policies that comply with both applicable U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance and federal regulations and recognize the needs of individuals with disabilities. These guidelines can be found below in the **Support Persons Definitions and Guidelines for COVID-19**

Visitation for Admitted Patients at Meritus Medical Center

- A. All Adult Inpatients excluding Obstetric Patients
 - 1. Non-suspected or negative COVID-19 patients
 - i. No visitors are allowed for Non-COVID diagnosed patients following Meritus Medical Center’s Visitation Guidelines.
 - ii. Two visitors are allowed at a time for End-of-life care. Other family members will have to remain outside the facility to rotate in special circumstances.
 - 2. Suspected or positive COVID-19 patients:
 - i. No visitors are allowed for COVID-19 diagnosed patients or if the patient is admitted to the infection containment unit.
 - 3. Exceptions to these rules apply to patients and their designated support person/s as outlined in the Access to Support for Patient with Disabilities in Health Care Settings notice issued by the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

- B. Obstetric Inpatients
 - 1. Non-suspected or negative COVID-19 patients
 - i. One designated support person is allowed for labor, delivery and the duration of the birth parent’s hospital stay. One support person is allowed in the operating room during surgical delivery.

- a. The designated support person should remain in the patient's room as much as possible after they arrive.
 - a. Exception: Provided for visitation of infant in newborn special care nursery with regard to limitations on leaving the patient's room.
 - ii. In the event the parent is discharged prior to the newborns discharge, one or two designated support person/s will be allowed for the duration of the hospital stay with the maximum of one caregiver onsite at any time.
 2. Suspected or positive COVID-19 patients:
 - i. One designated support person is allowed with the mother only.
 - ii. The designated support person cannot provide care to the newborn.
 - iii. If the parent/s decide to have baby in a separate room, the newborn will be allowed to have one designated support person who has been screened and does not have any symptoms of COVID-19.
 3. Exceptions to these rules apply to patients and their designated support person/s as outlined in the Access to Support for Patient with Disabilities in Health Care Settings notice issued by the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Disabilities.
- C. Pediatric Inpatients
1. Non-suspected or negative COVID-19 patients
 - i. One or two designated support person/s will be allowed for the duration of the hospital stay with the maximum of one caregiver onsite at any time.
 2. Suspected or positive COVID-19 patients:
 - i. Only one designated support person will be allowed with pediatric patients
 - ii. The designated caregiver must stay with the patient in their room during the patient's stay.
 - iii. Support persons should be parents or legal guardians, must be in good health and must remain in good health during the patient's hospitalization.
 3. Exceptions to these rules apply to patients and their designated support person/s as outlined in the Access to Support for Patient with Disabilities in Health Care Settings notice issued by the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

Visitor and Support Person Guidelines for Admitted Patients at Meritus Medical Center

- A. Visitors and Support Persons will be screened for flu-like symptoms, such as temperature, fever, cough or shortness of breath and will not be able to stay if symptomatic.
- B. No one under the age of 18 will be permitted unless they are the patient or guardian of a pediatric patient
- C. Face masks must be worn at all times while in the facility
- D. Visiting is permitted for the following circumstances:
 - i. Support Person/s for patients with a disability who require bedside care from a caregiver due to the specifics of their disability.
 - ii. Visitors for patients undergoing emergency surgery related to a traumatic event.

- iii. If the patient's care team requests the visitor to be a part of scheduled family training for patients with rehabilitation or for help with cognitive needs.
 - iv. For discharge education for patient when in-person bedside education is required.
 - v. Obstetrics: see Obstetric Patients section above
 - vi. Pediatrics: see Pediatric Inpatient section above
- E. Swapping of visitors or support person is permitted if outlined in the Visitation for Admitted Patients at Meritus Medical Center section above and must take place in the parking lot.
- a. The new visitor or support person must follow the same guidelines and be screened as the previous visitor.
- F. Patient Belongings
- a. Patient belongings brought in for the patient should be kept at a minimal
 - b. Outside food/beverage is permitted, but should not be shared between visitor and patient
 - c. Belongings should be placed in a clear bag provided by security
 - d. The unit the patient is on will be contacted by security to retrieve the belongings and take to the patient
- G. At the request of a patient/family for a visit from a clergy of any religious affiliation, the clergy can offer prayer via phone, zoom or outside the patient's room. Meritus can provide this service. Please contact Spiritual Care.
- H. If an exception is made and a visitor is entering a suspected/COVID patient room, the visitor will be educated on hand hygiene, donning and doffing gloves, gown and surgical mask with eye shield by nursing staff; nursing staff will provide proper personal protective equipment (PPE) training to visitors

Visitation for Other Meritus Health Services

- A. IV Infusion, Wound, or Same Day Surgery/Procedures
- 1. No visitors are allowed to stay with the patient or in the waiting room
 - i. One visitor may escort a patient to registration, but must leave the building after providing their phone number
 - ii. Exceptions to these rules apply to patients and their designated support person/s as outlined in the Access to Support for Patient with Disabilities in Health Care Settings notice issued by the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Disabilities.
- B. John R. Marsh Cancer Center
- 1. No visitors are allowed where care is being delivered to potentially immunocompromised patients.
 - 2. One visitor may escort a patient to registration, but must wait for the patient in the designated waiting area or in their car
 - 3. Exceptions to these rules apply to patients and their designated support person/s as outlined in the Access to Support for Patient with Disabilities in Health Care

Settings notice issued by the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

C. Adult and Pediatric Office Visits

1. One person will be permitted to accompany the patient.
2. No one under the age of 18 will be permitted unless they are the patient or guardian of the patient

D. Emergency Department Services

1. One visitor is allowed to accompany the patient in the waiting room unless Social Distancing maximum capacity is met.
2. One visitor is allowed to accompany the patient in the patient's Emergency Department room for the duration of the patient's stay in the Emergency Department.
3. Exceptions to these rules apply to patients and their designated support person/s as outlined in the Access to Support for Patient with Disabilities in Health Care Settings notice issued by the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

Visitor and Support Person Guidelines for Other Meritus Health Services

- A. No one under the age of 18 will be permitted unless they are the patient or guardian of a pediatric patient
- B. Face masks must be worn at all times while in the facility

Support Persons Definitions and Guidelines for COVID-19

Meritus Health will follow the Access to Support for Patient with Disabilities in Health Care Settings notice issued by the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Disabilities to adopt visitation policies that comply with both applicable U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance and federal regulations and recognize the needs of individuals with disabilities. These guidelines can be found below

A. Disability Definition

- a. Patients with disabilities, regardless of diagnosis or symptoms of COVID-19, are permitted to have access to support persons.
- b. The term "disability" means, with respect to an individual is defined as:
 1. a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;
 - i. major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and working
 - ii. a major life activity also includes the operation of a major bodily function, including but not limited to, functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.
 2. a record of such an impairment; or

3. being regarded as having such an impairment

- i. An individual meets the requirement of “being regarded as having such an impairment” if the individual establishes that he or she has been subjected to an action prohibited under this chapter because of an actual or perceived physical or mental impairment whether or not the impairment limits or is perceived to limit a major life activity. This does not apply to impairments that are transitory and minor. A transitory impairment is an impairment with an actual or expected duration of 6 months or less.

B. Support Person/s Definitions and Guidelines

- a. A support person may be a family member, personal care assistant, similar disability service provider, or other individual knowledgeable about the management or care of the patient who is authorized to assist the patient in making decisions.
- b. A patient may designate up to two support persons during their stay, but only one may be present at any given time.
- c. A support person is assessed for COVID-19 symptoms upon initial entry to the health care facility. Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms will not be permitted to serve as support person.
- d. Support persons will conform with PPE procedures at Meritus.
 - i. Support persons will be provided appropriate PPE, including instruction on how to utilize and conserve PPE.
- e. Support persons are permitted to access restrooms, food, and drink while in the health care facility.

C. Support Person/s Requests

- a. Support Persons may contact the Administrative Nursing Supervisor at 240-469-6081 for requests 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

REFERENCES

2020 Sept 24. Access to Support for Patients with Disabilities in Health Care Settings – FAQ, Department of Disabilities, Department of Health.
