

Effective Date: November 14, 2020

Within the UVM Health Network, we recognize that family members and loved ones are valued members of the healthcare team and play a key role in supporting the wellbeing of our patients. As we seek to limit further the spread of COVID-19 during this new surge, our network is implementing temporary changes to our welcoming policy to protect the health and well-being of our patients and families, our staff, and our community.

Patient and Family Communication:

We will make every attempt to accommodate, for the patients and their families, the ability to talk or visualize, via the use of electronic devices, (patient or hospital owned) as necessary, so patients/families stay connected to their loved one's during this time of social distancing.

For All:

No visitors are permitted at this time until further notice, with limited exceptions.

- In the case of these limited exceptions, everyone allowed to enter Network healthcare facilities:
 - Must follow current VT State Guidelines for quarantine. Those who have been in close contact with a person sick with COVID-19 must not visit our facilities.
 - Will be screened for a fever and COVID-19 symptoms prior to entry. Those with symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) will not be allowed to visit.
 - Is required to wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth for the entire time they are in the building. Those not able or willing to wear a mask for the duration of their time in the building will not be permitted entry or allowed to remain within our facilities. Commercial masks with outflow vents are not permitted. A mask will be provided if you do not have an acceptable face covering.
- Only ADA service animals are permitted. All others animals, including previously approved therapy dogs/support animals, or service animals in training are not allowed at this time.
- In some circumstances, one “essential support person” may be permitted entry as a visitor, as in the case of a patient with communication needs (such as persons who are deaf or who do not understand/speak English) or cognitive impairment who requires assistance to access care. This quota does not include hospital-contracted interpreters, who are considered members of the care team.

Inpatient/Acute Care and Emergency Department:

No visitors are permitted at this time until further notice, with some limited exceptions:

- **Patients in End-of-Life Care:** Visitation for patients, for whom death in the hospital is imminent, will be

managed by their care team. In general, one support person will be welcomed when a patient is nearing their end of life. No more than two family members at one time may be permitted in the patient room at the end of life.

- Designated support persons must stay in the patient's room when possible. Exiting and re-entering is highly discouraged.
- Support person designation cannot be transferred to anyone else.
- **Clergy:** All denominations are supported by our Chaplain program. Chaplains can arrange for a virtual visit with the patient's own clergy upon request. In-person clergy visits may be pre-arranged with a hospital Chaplain or through our Palliative Care Service. They must log in with a screener as a visitor; this situation would be considered part of the care team.
- **End-of-Life Planning:** Families members involved in end-of-life planning are to pre-schedule a meeting with the Palliative Care Team. If this meeting is in person, they must log in with a screener as a visitor.
- **Hospice Care:** Hospice nurses, chaplains and social workers are allowed to enter daily to visit their patients. All Hospice Care team members must log in with a screener as a visitor.
- **Labor and Delivery:** One designated support person is allowed on birthing units, extending through the post-partum stay on the mother-baby unit. This person is to remain with the patient on the unit and may stay the night. Hospital contracted, certified doulas are permitted as an additional support person. If an infant is required to stay after the mother is discharged, visitation should follow the pediatric guideline.
- **Pediatrics:** Parents are not considered 'visitors' but are rather considered essential support persons. Two parents/guardians; only one is permitted at a time, and either one may accompany pediatric patients for their entire stay.
- **Inpatient Psychiatry:** No visitors until further notice.
- **Emergency Department:**
 - One parent/guardian at a time for pediatric patients.
 - Patients for whom a support person has been determined to be essential to the care of the patient (medically necessary).
 - Two designated support people for patients in end of life care.
 - All exceptions must sign the Emergency Department visitor process.

Process for Exceptions to Inpatient/Acute Care and Emergency Department Policies:

- Any additional exception to this policy can only be made by the physician and nurse leader of the unit impacted. If the care team cannot reach consensus with regard to limited exceptions, the Chief Medical Officer, or the ANC/APC on evenings, nights and weekends, will be the final decision maker in all cases.
- For patients meeting an exception to the restriction on visitation, their identified support person should be documented in the patient's record. Units should identify patients who have a support person permitted (based upon one of the listed exceptions) and provide that information to the

information desk at the start of each day.

- Support persons who meet these exceptions will be screened upon entrance to the building before being allowed to visit. Those with symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing) or have an identified risk based on exposure will not be allowed to visit and can connect with the unit by phone to identify an alternate support person.
- All support persons allowed to visit are strongly encouraged to remain in the patient room during the duration of their visit, limit traffic in hallways and avoid congregating in waiting rooms, cafeterias and lobbies before, after or between visits. Family members/support persons are permitted to leave and re-enter the building but must be rescreened upon each entry. Family members are strongly encouraged to limit repeated entry and return.

Surgical/Procedural Areas:

One visitor/support person is permitted to escort an individual who is arriving for any procedure requiring sedation in the surgical or procedural waiting area.

- For those patients being admitted to the hospital following a procedure, the support person can remain with the patient until they are called back to pre-op or the procedural holding area and then should exit the hospital. Updates will be provided via phone.
- For ambulatory procedures, the support person may wait in the designated waiting area in order to receive discharge instructions and help escort the patient out following discharge.

Outpatient Clinics:

Family/friends are not permitted to accompany adult patients to outpatient visits:

Exceptions: There are limited exceptions for patients who require support and assistance to access their appointment as outlined below:

- **Pediatrics:** One parent or support person should accompany pediatric patients.
- **Limited Access to Care:** One support person is permitted in rare circumstances for a patient who requires assistance to access care (such as persons who are deaf or who do not understand/speak English) or cognitive impairment who requires assistance to access care. This applies to both outpatient clinic appointments, phlebotomy, and/or diagnostic imaging.
- **Distressing news and end-of-life planning:** One support person may be permitted to accompany a patient in anticipation of the following limited circumstances:
 - New diagnosis of a terminal illness
 - Patient's lack of response to treatment, which shifts the conversation towards end-of-life planning
 - Change in the course of treatment that could have significantly negative outcomes, including end-of-life
- **Fetal Ultrasound:** Obstetrics patients are permitted to bring one support person to their 20 week ultrasound appointment.
- **Diagnostic Imaging, Laboratory and Express Care:** One support person over the age of 18 is permitted

to accompany patient to visits if the patient requires support or assistance to access their appointment. One parent/guardian may accompany pediatric patients.

- Patient who would benefit from other forms of support during a visit (such as having a family member 'present' to listen, participate in the discussion, etc.) are **encouraged to include support persons via telephone or video-conferencing technology**.
- An exception to this policy for outpatient clinics requires approval from the VP of Medical Group Operations.

General Notes:

- Visitors to our pharmacies who present with any symptoms during screening will be stopped at the entry and provided a pamphlet with the pharmacy phone number. Patients with symptoms will be instructed to exit the building and call the pharmacy. The call will prompt a staff member to deliver the prescription to the patient's car.
- All family members and support persons will be asked to clean their hands upon entry and exit from any unit, patient room, or clinic and upon entry and exit from the building.
- Security will be called to respond to any family members/visitors who present significant safety concerns, including unwillingness to mask or comply with social distancing requirements, or refusing to leave when asked on the basis of these concerns.
- Visitation rules apply equally to employees who wish to visit friends or family regardless of whether they are on or off duty.
- This policy will be modified on a case-by-case basis for unique circumstances.