

Effective Date: April 12, 2021

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:

- 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.
- Where vaccination is required for entry, “fully vaccinated” is defined as being at least 14 days out from a single dose vaccination (e.g., Johnson and Johnson) or at least 14 days out from the second shot of a two-dose vaccine (e.g, Pfizer or Moderna).
- Only ADA service animals are permitted. All other animals, including previously approved therapy dogs/support animals, or service animals in training are not allowed at this time.

Inpatient/Acute Care and Emergency Department:

- **Adult inpatient units:** One healthy, fully vaccinated support person per day is permitted on adult inpatient units between the hours of 5am-9pm except for patients who are COVID+ or PUI. We encourage patients to limit those that they identify as support persons to one or two consistent family members over the course of the hospital stay but regardless of the numbers identified no more than one person will be permitted per day. An exception to vaccination requirement and visiting hours is permitted for patients

with communication or other special needs (including patients who are deaf or who do not understand or speak English and those with cognitive impairments). Interpreters are not considered support persons but members of the health care team.

- **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, two support persons will be welcomed when a patient is nearing or at their end of life and permitted to remain at the bedside without restriction on hours.
 - **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 healthy 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-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:** Two parents/guardians at the bedside between the hours of 5am-9am. Either one may accompany pediatric patients overnight.
- **Inpatient Psychiatry:** One pre-determined/consistent healthy, fully vaccinated support person is permitted. Due to the milieu environment on these units, the identified support person should be consistent day to day.
- **Emergency Department:**
 - One healthy, fully vaccinated support person is welcome at the bedside, unless the patient is COVID+ or PUI. Support persons are not able to wait in the waiting room but can join the patient once in an assigned room.
 - The care team may make exceptions to the vaccination requirement in response to emergent needs.
 - One healthy parents/guardian at a time are welcome for pediatric patients. An exception may be made to accommodate both parents or guardians as needs and space allow.
 - The care team will make determinations for patients in end of life care.
 - All support persons must follow the Emergency Department visitor sign-in 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.

- Support persons 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..
- 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 support person is permitted to escort an individual who is arriving for any procedure requiring sedation. As appropriate, the support person may be present at the bedside in both the Pre-op and PACU settings.

Outpatient Clinics:

In order to assure appropriate social distancing can be maintained in our waiting rooms and 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 healthy parent or support person should accompany pediatric patients.
- **Limited Access to Care:** One healthy 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. One healthy support person is also permitted for 2nd and 3rd trimester anatomy ultrasounds.
- **In Vitro Fertilization:** One fully vaccinated, healthy support person is permitted for intrauterine insemination (IUI) and for frozen embryo transfer (FET).
- **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:

- Across all settings, interpreters are not considered support persons. The UVM Health Network provides professional interpreting service by hospital-contracted interpreters, who are members of the care team. Support persons should not be asked to interpret.
- 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.
- Support people are asked to avoid eating and drinking in patient rooms as much as possible. Given that eating in close proximity to others remains a high risk activity, if necessary to eat/drink in the patient room, support people should turn away from the patient, only remove their mask to take a bite or sip and then replace the face covering.
- 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.