



Patient Visitation Policy

Relevance: Organization Wide

Related Policies and Documents: Patient Rights and Responsibilities; Health Care Proxy and Advance Directives Policy.

I. DISCLOSURE STATEMENT:

Policies and procedures of the hospital/department shall be utilized as guidelines with regard to the provision of patient care. They are not intended to replace nursing or clinical judgment of professional personnel, which should be exercised on a case-by-case basis. If questions or concerns exist in the provision of care as it relates to a policy/procedure, the employee should communicate with supervisory staff for review of the individual cases, guidance and direction.

II. SCOPE AND PURPOSE:

- A. To establish a policy where Gila Regional Medical Center (GRMC) recognizes family and friends as an important part of the recovery process of our patients. To further GRMC's goal to take excellent care of our patients, always maintain their privacy and give them the support that their loved ones can provide.
- B. To establish guidelines for visitors to follow to assure that all patients at GRMC have the environment they need to recover and that clinically reasonable and necessary restrictions or limitations on visitation are established and followed.
- C. To comply with federal statutes, CMS regulations CAH Conditions of Participation regarding patient visitation rights and New Mexico statutes concerning patient rights and hospital visitation. To comply with and support GRMC's Mission, Vision and Values.

III. GENERAL VISITATION POLICY

- A. All family and friends are welcome to visit patients at GRMC as set out herein. General visitation hours when the main hospital doors are open to receive visitors are from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
1. All patients, with the patient's consent, have the right to receive visitors designated by the patient, including but not limited to a spouse, domestic partner, another family member, friend or those individuals designated by legally valid advance directives, durable powers of attorney, health care proxies, or guardianship appointments. The patient may withdraw such consent at any time upon notice to GRMC.
 2. The patient's desire regarding who is designated by them to visit shall be followed without restriction or limitation or denial of visitation privileges based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.
 3. GRMC shall ensure that all visitors enjoy full and equal visitation privileges consistent with the patient's preferences.
 4. All patient designated visitors shall have the permitted access to patients as consented to by the patient regardless of whether they have a legally recognized relationship.
 5. Restriction of visitor access will be done based on patient request and as is reasonable and clinically necessary and shall not be based on any of the prohibited classifications set out in this policy; and
 6. Patient designated visitors will be given the opportunity to fully participate, if possible, in planning for the patient's care and treatment as requested by the patient.
- B. The number of visitors per room is not restricted, but may need to be modified to support our goal of providing a restful and healing environment for all our patients. Visitors may be asked to leave a patient room or non-public patient care area when it is clinically necessary, when it is requested by the patient, when the patient's privacy needs dictate such restrictions, if the patient care is being disrupted by the visitation, if the visitor's behavior is disruptive or abusive to the patient or GRMC caregivers or providers, or if the total number of visitors in a room is determined to be disruptive to the care of the patients in the room.
- C. Patients and their families will be provided with information about visitation at the time of admission. Caregivers on GRMC nursing units will reinforce the visitation information at the time of admission. Caregivers are also responsible for assuring that a restful environment is maintained for all patients.
- D. If a patient chooses to limit visitors, a sign designating such will be put on their door directing visitors to check at the nurse's station regarding visitation.
- E. Visitors shall abide by GRMC policies regarding its tobacco free campus and shall not smoke or use tobacco on GRMC premises.
- F. Visitors shall abide by GRMC policies regarding no weapons or firearms on campus. All weapons should be left at home or inside the visitor's locked vehicle.
- G. Visitors who are disruptive to patient care, abusive to patients, other visitors, GRMC caregivers and providers, or who are observed violating hospital policies as set out in this policy will be

asked to leave the premises. Visitors who are observed violating the law will be reported to local law enforcement and will be asked to leave the premises.

IV. VISITATION ON SPECIALTY UNITS

1. Emergency Department (ED)
 - a. Visitors may be limited to the primary waiting area except for two (2) family members/friends determined by the ED staff and the family.
 - b. Visitors may be asked to leave the room while the staff provides care or if the presence of visitors is disruptive to the delivery of care to the patient or the safety of the patient.
 - c. Children are generally not allowed in the ED rooms where care is being delivered.
2. Labor and Delivery
 - a. Visitors will be allowed in the Labor/Delivery rooms. At the time of admission, the staff will discuss with the patient her desires about visitors during her labor and delivery.
 - b. The wishes of the patient will be adhered to according to GRMC's general policy of visitors not being disruptive to the delivery of care or the safety of the patient.
3. Special Care (SCU)
 - a. Visitors in this area may be limited to two (2) family members/friends at a time, that are over 12 years of age. Exception will be made at the discretion of the Supervisor/Director.
 - b. The time that a visitor may visit with a patient is based on the condition of the patient.
 - c. Visitors may be asked to leave the room while the staff provides care or if the presence of visitors is disruptive to the delivery of care or the safety of the patient.
 - d. The SCU will be closed to visitation during shift change from 0645 to 0730 and 1845 to 1930. If the family wants to visit a patient during shift change, the visit must be planned with the nurse caring for patient.

V. VISITATION IN OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENTS

The primary needs of all patients will determine the visitation guidelines in out-patient areas. Regulatory requirements, privacy, and space considerations play a part in determining where patient visitors may be when their loved ones are at GRMC for outpatient procedures, including surgery. Visitation will be permitted in these areas at the direction of the nurse caring for the patient or the charge nurse on-duty. Outpatient areas include, but are not limited, to Cancer Center, Radiology, Infusion Therapy and the surgical departments.

A. Cancer Center

1. All visitors will check in at the front desk when wishing to visit a patient that is in the treatment suite or in one of the extended care rooms.

2. One visitor at a time is allowed for each patient in the treatment suite. Recliners are for patient use only. Stools are for GRMC caregivers only.
3. Visitors may be asked to remain in the waiting room until the patient is brought back, vital signs are taken, intravenous access is established, labs are drawn, etc. Visitors may also be asked to leave the patient's room or GRMC patient care areas during treatment of the patient.
4. No Children under the age of 18 will be allowed into the treatment suite or extended care rooms except under special circumstances.
5. Only two (2) visitors are allowed in the extended care rooms.

B. Pediatric Admissions:

1. A parent or guardian are encouraged to remain with their children during hospitalization.
2. Parents or guardians are encouraged to always remain with their child 13 years and younger during their stay at GRMC.
3. This information will be obtained at the time of admission and updated upon the parent or guardian's request. The information will be recorded in the patient's chart.
4. When leaving GRMC premises, parents or guardians are requested to leave a telephone number where they can be reached and to keep the staff informed of who will be staying with the patient.
5. Visitors, other than family members, may visit the child according to regular GRMC visitation policy, unless deemed inappropriate by parent or guardian.

C. Sleep Study Laboratory:

1. Patients in the Sleep Study Lab under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian during the procedure.
2. After hours, 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., the parent or guardian must check in through admissions to obtain a visitor pass.

D. Nursery:

1. The mother, father, guardian, significant other of the mother or must wear the identification bands always provided at the time of delivery during the stay of the newborn at GRMC.
2. In the event of a neonate returning to the Level 2 Nursery from an outside facility, the mother, father, guardian, significant other of the mother or must wear the identification bands for the duration of the neonate's admission.
3. For after-hours visitation, the mother, father, guardian, significant other of the mother or designee must follow GRMC's Patient Visitation Policy.

E. Surgical Services:

1. One family member over the age of 18 years old may accompany the patient to the pre-operative area and may return to the recovery area when requested by the recovery staff.

- F. Visitors spending the night with patients:
 - 1. One visitor may spend the night with the patient and must be able to care for themselves. No one under age 16 will be able to spend the night.

VI. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ASSURING COMPLIANCE WITH VISITATION POLICIES

- A. It is the responsibility of either the designated Charge nurse on the unit or the nurse caring for a patient to educate the patient, family members, and friends about GRMC's Patient Visitation Policy.
- B. The goal is to ensure that consideration is given to the patient and family needs for support as well as providing the patient with a restful and safe environment in which to recover.

VII. FAMILY AND VISITOR SUPPORT

- A. The designated Charge Nurse on the unit or House Supervisor has discretion to provide one guest tray per day for a parent or other person identified as a primary caregiver, and to request courtesy carts for the visitors who are present for end-of-life care
 - 1. GRMC does not have free long distance telephone service available to patients.
- B. In order to comply with HIPAA restrictions relating to the disclosure of a patient's protected health information (PHI), the following procedure will be followed:
 - 1. Upon admission to GRMC, a designated individual will be determined by the nurse caring for the patient and the patient or, if a patient is unable to consent, the patient's guardian or surrogate decision-maker.
 - 2. The designated individual will be the primary point of contact for the GRMC caregivers and providers.
 - 3. A CODEWORD will be determined and provided to a maximum of three family members or friends. The designated person, CODEWORD, names of individuals with the CODEWORD and contact numbers will all documented in the patient's chart. Family and friends calling the hospital for updates on the patient's condition will be asked to provide the appropriate CODEWORD before receiving patient information.
- C. GRMC provides social service and discharge services to patients. GRMC will provide additional social service and discharge services to patients and others who are assisting the patient with discharge needs.
- D. Visitors may bring specific items of comfort to the hospital for the patient such as pillows and pictures. Visitors will be advised to notify the nurse caring for the patient about the added items as well as any items taken home. The nurse caring for the patient will log these personal items in the patient's personal item list. Items of sentimental value that might be lost are discouraged. GRMC will not be responsible for the loss or damage to any visitor or patient personal item.
- E. If Visitors bring in any food or drink items to the patient care areas for patient consumption, such items must be reported and given prior approval by the patient's caregivers and providers

so that such items do not delay care or interfere with the current established plan of care for the patient.

VIII. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Seasonal Flu Voluntary Visitors Guidelines: During Flu season or other identified potential infectious outbreak that may negatively impact GRMC patients the following applies:

- A. Infection Control:
 - 1. GRMC cares about the health of all caregivers, patients and visitors. Therefore, it is requested that visitors do not visit if they are sick or have a fever, cough, sore throat, cold, rash, vomiting, diarrhea or pink eye.
 - 2. Visitors will be required to wear a mask per the CDC guidelines for health care facilities.
- B. Visitors who exhibit symptoms of fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, will be asked to stay home and may be restricted from patient care areas.
- C. Patients who have flu symptoms who have visitors are instructed to:
 - 1. Ask for a mask; and
 - 2. Wear a mask if you have flu or cold symptoms.
- D. Visitors will be asked to wash their hands frequently with soap and water or to use the hand sanitizer upon entering and exiting the room and before and after each patient contact.

Disruptive, Threatening, or Illegal Behaviors

- A. The following behaviors, if exhibited by visitors, will result in a request to the visitor to leave the premises, notification of law enforcement and/or removal of the visitor from the premises:
 - 1. Violence.
 - 2. Threats or threatening behavior to caregivers, other visitors, or patients.
 - 3. Behaviors that are consistent with intoxication or the influence of alcohol or drugs.
 - 4. Threat of, or possession of, or use of any weapon, (i.e., knife or gun or other obvious weapon).
 - 5. Threatening or abusive language to caregivers, other visitors, or patients.
 - 6. Racial, discriminatory or sexually inappropriate remarks to caregivers, other visitors, or patients.
 - 7. Offensive sexual behavior, gestures or touching directed to caregivers, other visitors, or patients.
 - 8. Possession and/or ingesting illegal drugs or alcohol.
 - 9. Selling or providing illegal drugs, alcohol, or other dangerous substances to caregivers, other visitors, or patients.
 - 10. Theft of GRMC, GRMC caregiver, another visitor, or patient property.
 - 11. Excessive and prolonged noise which disrupts the operation of the hospital or

otherwise interferes with patient care.

12. Repeated smoking or refusal to cease smoking in non-approved smoking areas.

B. Caregivers who are subject to violent, threatening, or abusive behavior involving a hospital visitor should take the following actions:

1. Immediately withdraw from the situation.
2. Immediately notify the House Supervisor, security, law enforcement, Director of Risk Management, department director, and other leadership, as appropriate.
3. Steps will be taken to remove the visitor from the premises as appropriate.
4. Adult Protective Services and/or Child, Youth and Families Department may be notified, as appropriate.
5. Complete an event report.
6. Risk Management in conjunction with security, law enforcement, and other leadership will determine if additional measures should be taken.

C. Caregivers who witness any illegal behavior as described above and including the possession or selling of illegal drugs or other dangerous substances or theft should take the following actions:

1. Immediately notify the House Supervisor, Security, the Director of Risk Management and law enforcement.
2. Notification should also be made to the department director and other leadership, as appropriate.
3. Steps should be taken to remove the visitor from the premises as necessary using the House Supervisor, security, the Director of Risk Management, and/or law enforcement as resources.
4. Adult Protection Services and/or Children, Youth and Families Department should be notified as appropriate.
5. Complete an event report.
6. Risk Management in conjunction with security, law enforcement, and other leadership will determine if additional measures are to be taken.

D. Caregivers who witness any other behavior as described above should take the following actions:

1. Immediately notify security, the House Supervisor, and the Director of Risk Management.
2. Notification should also be made to law enforcement, department director, other leadership, Adult Protective Services, and Children, Youth and Families, as appropriate.
3. Steps should be taken to remove the visitor from the premises as necessary using the House Supervisor, security, the Director of Risk Management, and/or law enforcement as resources.
4. Complete an event report.

5. Risk Management in conjunction with security, law enforcement, and other leadership will determine if additional measures are to be taken.

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