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**19 October 2021**

**AMENDED HOSPITAL VISITATION GUIDELINES FOR LEVEL 1**

During the third wave and level 3 restrictions, Western Cape Government Health had to restrict visitation at hospitals to align with regulations and to reduce the number of people in our facilities at a time. However, we firmly believe that being visited by their loved ones is an important part of a patient’s road to recovery. It is also essential to family who are anxious about the wellbeing of their loved one and wants to visit them in hospital. We also understand that it is also reassuring for young patients or the elderly to have an escort present when visiting the emergency room or outpatients’ department.

In line with the country moving to level 1 restrictions, Western Cape Government Health has recently adjusted its visitation guidelines accordingly to allow visitation at hospitals under strict safety precautions. We believe this will bring some relief to both patients and family members in the recovery process and the support offered respectively.

**The amended visitation guidelines include:**

* Visitors and escorts are only allowed at health facilities under special circumstances and must be screened at the entrance of the facility.
* **Outpatients:**
  + One escort is only allowed for paediatric, disabled, vulnerable, or weak patients.
* **Emergency Unit:**
  + Paediatric patients – one escort allowed to accompany patient into emergency room.
  + Terminal patients – family members allowed to be present, but only one or two family members allowed to be present at a time.
  + Disabled/vulnerable patients – one escort may be allowed depending on situation. Will be assessed on a case-to-case basis.
  + All other patients: One escort who will remain in waiting room if there is sufficient space.
* **Inpatients (adults):**
  + Limited to 30 minutes visitation per visitor.
  + Visiting time slot of 60 minutes per ward per day. Confirm with hospital what the ward’s visiting hours are before visiting.
  + Terminally ill patients allowed to be visited by loved ones. Restricted to 30 min per person per day – more people and longer time at discretion of ward manager.
  + Critically ill patients allowed one designated visitor once per day.
* **Inpatients (paediatric):**
  + One parent/caregiver can be with the patient.
  + Parent/caregiver can alternate with other parent/caregiver, but only one allowed with patient at a time.
  + More family members allowed for terminal patients for 30 minutes, one person at a time. More people and longer time slots at discretion of ward manager.
* **Neonatal patients:**
  + Mother can remain with patient or regularly visit.
  + Birthing partner or one designated person can visit daily for 30 minutes. Longer visitation at discretion of ward manager.
* **Maternity & labour:**
  + COVID-19 positive patients in labour – no birthing partners allowed.
  + COVID-19 negative patients in labour – one birthing partner during active labour if sufficient space and privacy available.
  + C-section: Birthing partners not allowed in theatre but can visit mother and baby for 30 minutes in postnatal ward.
  + Teenagers in labour: A birthing partner will be accommodated at the discretion of the ward manager.
  + Post-natal ward: Birthing partner allowed to visit mother and new-born for 30 minutes per day during visiting period.
* **COVID-19 and PUI patients:**
  + No visitors allowed.
  + Can drop off parcels (toiletries, food, books, etc.)
  + Exceptions will be made for terminally ill patients.
* All other non-terminally ill adult patients not allowed visitors. Parcels (toiletries, food, books) can be dropped off at facility. Family will be updated on patient’s condition – please ensure they have the correct contact number on file.

With the COVID-19 virus still present we must remain vigilant to avoid congestion and to maintain a safe physical distance between people. These guidelines will be assessed and implemented according to each facility’s current situation and capacity. They are also dependent on where we find ourselves during the pandemic keeping the best interest and safety of both staff and patients' top priority. Therefore, we have already adopted virtual communication as a means when someone cannot be visited to connect with family members in the future. Please call the relevant facility before visiting to ask about their visitation guidelines.

All patients and visitors to maintain the following safety precautions: wear a mask over your mouth and nose, maintain a physical distance, ensure good ventilation, and wash or sanitise hands often.

