



POLICY TITLE: In-Person Visitation Rights and Safety Guidelines

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SUMMARY & PURPOSE:

Baptist Health's principles are to welcome our patients and visitors with open arms, open hearts, and open minds as we understand and value the importance of visitors to our patients' healing. In addition, the health and safety of our visitors, patients, and caregivers during in-person visitations is of utmost importance. To encourage and support visitations, to include during periods of local emergencies or widespread community transmission of a communicable disease, this policy highlights our patients' minimum visitation rights, and the necessary health and safety measures that must be maintained during authorized in-person visitations.

Our visitation program is managed at each facility by the Patient Experience department and the Security department. Our facilities may provide additional guidelines based on their local community needs, beyond what is included in this policy (e.g., unique visitation hours, specific entry points in and out of the facility, permissible length of visits and number of visitors beyond what is included in this policy). This policy and latest facilities-specific information is accessible on our home page: [Visitor Guidelines](#) | [COVID-19 Updates](#) | [Baptist Health South Florida \(baptisthealth-coronavirus.com\)](#)

POLICY:

1. In-Person Visitation Rights.

- a. Baptist Health supports in-person visitations, when appropriate. At a minimum, patients may be accompanied by a visitor(s) in the following circumstances, unless the patient objects: end-of-life situations; labor and delivery; pediatric patients; patient who is making a major medical decision and or being asked to provide informed consent; and patients with special needs.

Patients with special needs include a patient who was living with family before being admitted, or being placed on observation status, who is struggling with the change in environment; a patient who is experiencing emotional distress or grieving a recent death; a patient who needs cueing or encouragement to eat or drink; and a patient who used to talk and interact with others who is seldom speaking.

- b. In addition, patients who are admitted or under observation status, or a patient staying overnight may choose to designate a visitor who is a family member, friend, guardian, or other individual as an essential visitor who is entitled to visit for at least two (2) hours daily. The designated essential visitor is not required to provide necessary care to the patient as a condition of visitation.
- c. Visitors are not required to provide proof of vaccination or immunization.

2. General Health and Safety Guidelines:

- a. Hand hygiene: Performing hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand rub is one of the easiest and most important things we can do to stay healthy and stop the spread of bacteria and viruses. Visitors are asked to wash their hands and practice hand hygiene frequently, to include before entering and leaving a patient's room, after touching any surface, and prior to leaving the facility/patient care unit.

All references to Policies must go to the BHSF Master Copy on the BHSF Intranet; do not rely on other versions / copies of the Policy.

- b. Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette: Visitors should practice good respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette (e.g., covering mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing) in the event an individual develops respiratory symptoms while visiting our facility.
- c. Education to visitors: Each Baptist Health facility/patient care unit will communicate to each authorized visitor any potential risk(s) during and after an in-person visitation, and the necessary protective measures to prevent/limit exposure during and after the in-person visit, to include adequate use of provided personal protective equipment (PPE), proper handwashing practices, and limiting touching surfaces during an in-person visitation.
- i. Visitors will be informed of the potential risks associated with in-person visitations, especially for visitors at high risk for serious illness, and/or designated essential visitors that have extended contact with a patient under isolation precautions.
 - ii. Visitors will be informed of the necessary health and safety measures, to include how to wear and remove any necessary protective device as they enter and exit the patient's room/patient care unit.
- d. When visiting a patient who is under isolation precautions (higher risk of transmission during visitation):
- i. Visitors are expected to follow the necessary health and safety measures, to include proper use and removal of protective devices, regardless of transmission levels in the community and vaccination status of the visitor or patient.
 - ii. Visitors should not be present during any high-risk patient care activity, to include during an aerosol-generating procedures (AGPs) of a COVID-19 positive patient or other high-risk procedures.
 - iii. High-risk practices by the visitor inside a patient's room/within proximity of the patient will not be allowed, including eating, or removal of face mask and other necessary protective device(s).
- e. During periods of widespread community transmission:
- i. Active screening for symptoms: To minimize the risk of transmission within our facilities during periods of widespread community transmission, visitors may be asked to use designated entry points and be screened for symptoms, to include temperature, prior to entering our facility/patient care unit.
 - ii. Universal source control: To prevent transmission of a transmissible disease or virus, visitors may be asked to practice universal source control, to include during periods of significant local community transmission. Source control involves having individuals wear a face mask over their mouth and nose to contain their respiratory secretions, and thus reduce the dispersion of droplets from an infected or potentially infected individual. This will decrease the possibility of exposing others.
- Note: visitors should remove their face mask as they leave the facility/patient care unit unless it was compromised while inside the patient's room or when within proximity to the patient. In that event, and when safe to do so, replace the mask with a new face mask for the duration of the visit and until the visitor leaves the facility/patient care unit.
- f. Baptist Health maintains the right to suspend in-person visitations of a specific visitor if the individual interferes with patient care activities, and/or violates any of our policies during visitations.

SUPPORTING/REFERENCE DOCUMENTATION:

- Florida Senate Bill 988, No Patient Left Alone Act (2022)
- Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), Visitation Rights (2022) [AHCA: Visitation \(myflorida.com\)](https://www.fhca.com/visitation)

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