



VISITATION GUIDELINES

Administrative Policy and Procedure	
Approved: November 2017	Next Review: November 2020
Department: All departments	
Population Covered: All patients and visitors	
Campus: Ballard, Cherry Hill, Edmonds, First Hill, Issaquah, Mill Creek, Redmond	Implementation Date: March 2007

Related Policies and Procedures:

[Dismissing A Visitor](#)

[Patient Rights](#)

[Pets, Service Animals, and Pet Therapy](#)

[Patient Access: Presenting Use and Disclosure \(Opt Out\) of Hospital Directory](#)

[Patient Health Information: No Clinical Disclosure](#)

[Visitor Behavior Management Agreement](#)

[Visitors, Observers, and Family Members in the Operating Room, Recovery Room, and Invasive Procedures Departments](#)

[Workplace Violence Prevention](#)

[Mandated Reporters who are not Clinical Social Workers](#)

Go directly to:

[Procedure for Inpatients](#)

[Procedure for Emergency Departments](#)

Purpose

To provide visitation guidelines and define expectations for family members, friends, and others visiting patients.

Policy Statement

Swedish Medical Center (SMC) is committed to patient-centered care, incorporating a healthcare environment that is welcoming and understanding of the importance visitors play in the healing and comfort of hospital patients.

Each patient has the right to receive visitors he or she designates, including (but not limited to) a spouse, a domestic partner, a family member or friend.

Visitation privileges are not restricted, limited, or otherwise denied on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.

A patient may withdraw consent for a visitor at any time during his or her stay in the hospital.

Guidelines for dependent family members / visitors: For the safety of patients, visitors and hospital staff, Swedish staff cannot be responsible for the care or supervision of our patients' visitors. This

includes minor children and patients' loved ones who are dependent due to dementia or inability to complete activities of daily living independently (see definitions below). These family members or dependents are not permitted to stay with patients in their inpatient or emergency department rooms unless another responsible adult or adult caregiver are present to provide continuous support and supervision. See the Clinical Job Aid: Disposition of Minor / Vulnerable Adult Visitors.

Responsible Persons

All administrative and clinical staff or visitors.

Prerequisite Information

Inpatients are advised of hospital visitation guidelines during orientation to the unit and via receipt of the [Welcome to Swedish](#) handbook. Ambulatory, Hospital Outpatient and Emergency service areas have this information posted and also communicated directly by staff members via written [Patient Rights](#) handouts offered during admission.

It may be necessary at times for staff to restrict or limit visitors if an individual's presence infringes on others' rights, privacy or safety, or is medically or therapeutically contraindicated. In this instance, the care team will communicate this determination to the patient, designated representative or decision-maker.

Special considerations that may determine the amount of time family and visitors spend with the patient include (but are not limited to):

- Issues related to infection control.
- Visitation may interfere with the care of other patients.
- SMC staff is aware that there is an existing court order restricting contact.
- Visitors who engage in disruptive, threatening, or violent behavior of any kind.
- Rest or privacy for patient or patient's roommate(s)
- Patient is undergoing care interventions.
- In the case of a pandemic event, such as widespread influenza, hospital visitation may be limited based on recommendations of the local county health department.

Maintaining Safety / Reportable Conditions

1. **After hours:** All caregivers are responsible for ensuring that persons in the facility after hours are wearing a visitor badge or an SMC-issued photo ID badge. All caregivers on patient care units are responsible for ensuring the protection of their patients by checking for valid and appropriate after-hours visitor badges.
2. **Security is contacted immediately:**
 - If a person is found on the unit after hours without a visitor badge.
 - Whenever staff is concerned for their own safety. Call *Code Gray* or *Mr. North* to alert Security and all areas in the hospital of a potential workplace violence situation.
 - If there is an unauthorized entry to the patient care area.
 - If staff suspects or is concerned about a *High-risk Visitor* (see definition).
 - If there is any indication that the information given by the visitor is false.
 - If the patient gives any indication that the visitor is not welcome.
 - Refer to the [Visitor Behavior Management Agreement](#) policy as needed.

PROCEDURE FOR INPATIENTS

Responsible Person	Steps
All Staff	<p>OPEN VISITING HOURS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Visiting hours at all Swedish Medical Center facilities are 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Swedish Medical Center reserves the right to end visiting hours at any time, or to revoke the visitation privileges of any individual in order to maintain patient and staff safety. See Dismissing a Visitor. 2. SMC and individual nursing units may restrict the number of visitors per patient during visiting hours if determined clinically necessary or otherwise communicated. 3. Nothing in this policy restricts individual nursing units from requiring visitor passes even during visiting hours, either for the unit as a whole or for individual patients.
Charge Nurse, All Staff	<p>OBTAINING AN AFTER-HOURS VISITOR BADGE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The charge nurse or designee is responsible for ensuring that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All patient visitors on their unit who wish to remain after visiting hours have visitor badges, and • All visitors on the unit who arrive after hours are wearing visitor badges. <p>The charge nurse may delegate the issuance of blue-colored after-hours visitor badges (form 70081) to other nursing unit staff, particularly the nurse assigned to the patient.</p> <p>Mother/baby units: Use pink-colored visitor badge 70082.</p> 2. The visitor badge must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nursing unit • The room number of the patient that they are visiting, and • The date that the badge was issued. 3. After hours badges are only valid on the time of issue until 5:00 a.m. the following morning. If the same person wishes to visit on a different evening/night they must request another visitor badge.
Security	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Persons who arrive after visiting hours and wish to visit a patient must enter through the Emergency Department (enter in Main Lobby at First Hill) and check in with Security. Security will contact the nursing unit and speak to the charge nurse or the nurse assigned to the patient for approval to issue a visitor badge. Security will not issue an after-hours visitor badge without approval from the nursing unit. Security may deny access if the potential visitor presents a potential risk to staff or patient safety.
Visitors	<p>AFTER-HOURS VISITOR BADGE PRIVILEGES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The after-hours visitor badge grants the badge holder permission to be in the patient room indicated on their badge during non-visiting hours. 2. Clinical staff may ask the visitor to leave from time to time to perform medical procedures. 3. The visitor may be in public areas of the nursing unit (such as waiting areas) but may not enter any other patient room. 4. The visitor may be in public areas in the building. Examples of these areas include cafeterias, lobbies, public restrooms and hallways connecting nursing units with these areas.

	5. Visitors are not allowed on any nursing or clinical unit other than that which is indicated on their visitor badge.
Clinical Staff Security	<p>DOCUMENTATION</p> <p>1. Nursing units are strongly encouraged to keep an after-hours visitor badge log that includes the name of the visitor, the room number, and the date for which the badge was issued. The log should also include any visitor badges approved over the phone to Security.</p> <p>2. Security Services maintains a log of after-hours visitors that includes the name of the person on the nursing unit approving the issuance of an after-hours visitor badge.</p>

PROCEDURE FOR EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS

Responsible Person	Steps
Patient Registration	<p>OBTAINING A VISITOR BADGE</p> <p>1. Registration staff asks each visitor requesting access to the Emergency Department patient care area for his/her first and last name, and exact name of patient to visit. The visitor(s) is then asked to have a seat in the waiting area pending clinical staff and patient approval.</p> <p>2. Registration staff calls the request back to the patient's primary nurse, using the visitor's first and last name, and waits for approval.</p> <p>3. Preferably, no more than two visitors at a time are allowed access to the patient. Access will be at the discretion of the clinical staff.</p>
ED Staff	4. Provided there are no clinical reasons preventing visitors, the ED staff obtains patient approval and relays the decision to the registration staff.
Patient Registration	<p>5. If approval is received by the ED staff, the visitor is given an orange-colored ER visitor badge (form 75909).</p> <p>6. Patient Registration fills out a badge with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room number of the patient to be visited • Date <p>The badge is displayed on the visitor in a visible location.</p> <p>7. Patient Registration either escorts the visitor to the patient's room or hands off to an ED staff person. If the handoff cannot occur due to conflict in timing with patient care, the visitor will wait in the waiting area until the timing is appropriate for escorting to the patient's room.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a. The visitor badge may suffice for after-hours badging if the patient visited wants the visitor to accompany him or her to an inpatient unit.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">b. Inform Security when visitors accompany a patient to an inpatient unit, for input into their after-hour log book.</p>
Security	<p>DOCUMENTATION</p> <p>1. Security Services maintains a log of after-hours visitors that includes the name of the person on the nursing unit approving the issuance of an after-hours visitor badge.</p>

Definitions

High-risk visitor. Includes but is not limited to a person on the hospital campus visiting patients or caregivers with a history of criminal violence or sexual abuse; or who is classified as a sexual offender or has a history of domestic violence; or who is making threats against the safety of a patient, caregiver or other representative; or a person who actively interferes with a patient's medical care.

Minor Children are defined as any child under the age of 18 years, who is neither emancipated nor married to an adult.

Responsible adult is defined as the parent or guardian, durable power of attorney for healthcare, legal next of kin or other adult over 18 acting in place of a parent, guardian, durable power of attorney for healthcare or legal next of kin who could be expected to provide adequate safety and supervision of the minor child or dependent adult.

Responsible caregiver is defined as a person over 18 who is acting at the bequest or employment of a parent, guardian, durable power of attorney or legal next of kin of the minor child or dependent adult and who could be expected to provide adequate safety and supervision.

Visitor. A “visitor” is a guest of the patient. Patients may receive or refuse visitors at their (or their representative’s) discretion, unless there is a clinically necessary or reasonable restriction/limitation as described in this policy. A visitor may also be in public areas of the patient’s unit (such as waiting area) but may not enter any other patient room.

Visitor’s badge. A visitor badge grants the badge holder permission to be in the patient room indicated on their badge during after-hours or as defined by a particular unit. The visitor badge must include the **nursing unit**, the **room number** of the patient that they are visiting, and the **date** that the badge was issued. Badges are only valid on the evening and into the night that they are issued. Nothing in this policy restricts individual nursing units from requiring visitor badges even during open visiting hours, either for the unit as a whole or for individual patients.

Vulnerable adults. These include persons meeting any one of the following criteria:

- 1) Sixty years of age or older with the functional, mental, or physical inability to care for himself or herself.
- 2) Adults 18 years of age or older found incapacitated under chapter 11.88 RCW.
- 3) Adults 18 years of age or older who have a developmental disability (RCW 71A.10.020).
- 4) Adults 18 years of age or older admitted to any facility.
- 5) Adults 18 years of age or older receiving services from home health, hospice, or home care agencies licensed or required to be licensed under chapter 70.127 RCW.
- 6) Adults 18 years of age or older receiving services from an individual provider.
- 7) Adults 18 years of age or older who self-direct their own care and receive services from a personal aide under chapter 74.39 RCW.

Forms

- ◆ [Visitor Behavior Agreement Form](#)

Supplemental Information

Patient representative documentation. Swedish Medical Center may, when circumstances require, request defined patient representation by a written legal document. Examples of when documentation might be required are if there is a conflict between two visitors, or if there is a dispute regarding defined representative(s) in an Advance Directive. SMC will also follow [RCW 7.70.065](#) guidelines in resolving conflicts among those claiming to be representatives or support persons.

Incapacitated patients. When a patient is incapacitated or otherwise unable to communicate his or her wishes and an individual provides an advance directive designating an individual as the patient's support person (it is not necessary for the document to use this exact term), SMC will accept this designation and allow the individual to exercise the patient's visitation rights on the patient's behalf. [§482.13(h)(1)&(2)]

Regulatory Requirement

CMS. [§482.13\(h\)](#) – Patient Visitation Rights.

[WAC 246-320-296](#) – Management of Environment for Care.

DNV. PR.1, SR.12, PE.4.

Addenda

[Patient Rights poster](#) for all Patient Access areas (ADMN-01-02005)

[Visitors at Swedish multilingual poster](#) (ADMIN-13-0750-O)

[Patient Rights handout](#)

[Welcome to Swedish guide](#)

[Visiting Hours for Pediatric Units](#)

[ER Visitor Badge \(form 75909\)](#)

[General After-Hours Visitor Badge \(form 70081\)](#)

[Mother-Baby Unit After-Hours Visitor Badge \(form 70082\)](#)

[After Hours Visitor Log](#)

STAKEHOLDERS

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