



**POLICY TITLE:** In-Person Visitation Rights & Safety Guidelines

**Responsible Department:** Patient Experience Department

**Creation Date:** 05/05/2022

**Last Review Date:** 07/28/2023

**Next Review Date:** 07/28/2024

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**PUBLISHED (Released):** 07/28/2023

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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. The health and safety of our visitors, patients, and caregivers during in-person visitations is of utmost importance. To promote and facilitate 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 to be followed during authorized in-person visitations.

Our visitation program is managed by the Office of Patient Experience. This policy, our Patient Bill of Rights, and the latest facilities-specific visitation information is accessible on our Baptist Health intranet website (<https://baptisthealth.net/>).

Our general visitation hours for hospital facilities are 7 a.m.- 9 p.m. (Miami Dade and Monroe County facilities) and 8 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Palm Beach facilities). Our facilities may provide additional guidelines based on their local community needs, to include 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.

## POLICY:

### 1. In-Person Visitation Rights

- A. Baptist Health will not restrict, limit, or deny visitation privileges based on race, age, national origin, ancestry, nationality, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, veteran status, or disability. All visitors enjoy full and equal visitation privileges consistent with patient privileges and the limitations set forth in this policy.
- B. Visitors designated by the patient, include, but are not limited to a spouse, domestic partner (including a same-sex partner), a family member, guardian, a friend, or other individual.

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.



- C. In-person visitations include the allowance of consensual physical contact between a patient and a visitor, as appropriate.
- D. In-person visitations are provided daily for patients who are admitted or under observation status, or a patient staying overnight. Visitations are also allowed in the following circumstances, unless the patient objects:
  - I. End-of-life situations.
  - II. A patient who was living with family before being admitted to the provider's care is struggling with the change in environment and lack of in-person family support.
  - III. A patient is making one or more major medical decisions.
  - IV. A patient who is experiencing emotional distress or grieving the loss of a friend or family member who recently died.
  - V. A patient who needs cueing or encouragement to eat or drink which was previously provided by a family member or caregiver.
  - VI. A patient who used to talk and interact with others is seldom speaking.
  - VII. Childbirth, including labor and delivery.
  - VIII. Pediatric patients
- E. Additionally, patients have the option to designate an "Essential Visitor" who is allowed in-person visitations for at least 2 hours daily in addition to any other authorized visitations provided in this policy.
- F. Visitors are not required to provide necessary care to the patient as a condition of visitation.
- G. Visitors are not required to provide proof of vaccination or immunization.

## 2. **General Health & 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 most effective ways to stay healthy and prevent the spread of infections. Visitors are asked to 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.
- 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 or use their upper sleeve 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 inform each authorized visitor of the potential risk during and after an in-person visitation, and the necessary protective measures to prevent/limit exposure, to include the adequate use of provided personal protective equipment (PPE), proper hand hygiene 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 transmission-based precautions.
  - II. Visitors will be informed of the necessary health and safety measures, to include how to wear and remove any necessary personal protective equipment as they enter and exit the patient's room/patient care unit.
- D. **When visiting a patient who is under transmission-based 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 personal protective equipment, 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 patient with a communicable disease or other high-risk procedures.

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- 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 personal protective equipment.
- E. **Health and safety measures:**
- I. **Screening for symptoms:** To minimize the risk of transmission within our facilities during periods of significant local transmission, visitors may be asked to use designated entry points and be screened for symptoms prior to entering our facility/patient care unit.
  - II. **Appropriate use of face masks:** To ensure the health and safety of our patients, employees, and visitors face masks will be required under special circumstances, such as when a patient, visitor, or employee is exhibiting signs or symptoms of or has a diagnosed infectious disease that can be transmitted through droplets or aerosols.
    - Baptist Health guidelines related to the appropriate use of face masks are found in Baptist Health's *Appropriate use of Masks* policy (BH-10000-66490-64).
- 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:**

- *No Patient Left Alone Act*, 408.823, F.S.
- Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), Visitation Rights (2022) [AHCA: Visitation \(myflorida.com\)](#)

#### **RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ASSOCIATED FORMS:**

- Baptist Health's *Patient Bill of Rights*: [Patient Bill of Rights | Baptist Health South Florida](#)
- BH-10000-66490-64, Baptist Health's *Appropriate Use of Masks* policy

#### **ENFORCEMENT & SANCTIONS:**

Visitors: 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

Employees: Violations of this policy may lead to revocation of system privileges and/or disciplinary action including termination. Anyone willfully violating this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.