

Title: COVID-19 Hospital & Clinic Patient Visitors Policy	
Type: Policy	HDSS Certification Standard
Issued by: Te Whatu Ora – Capital, Coast and Hutt Valley Incident Management Team	Version: 4.1
Applicable to: Capital, Coast and Hutt Valley Organisation wide	Contact person: Jenny Keene Hutt Valley Kaye Hudson Capital, Coast

Purpose

The purpose of this policy guidance is to provide advice on access by members of the family/whānau, carers and support person/people who are visiting patients, or providing support to patients, on all district hospital campuses during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

The purpose of whānau as partners in care is to ensure that whānau journeys through hospital are well guided, safe, respectful and mana enhancing.

We recognise whānau are essential to patient's lives and an important part of a patient's care, treatment and recovery. They provide support, care and help in decision-making.

We also recognise that our staff have the right to a safe workplace and all practicable steps must be undertaken to eliminate risks, and where not practicable to do so, minimise these.

As we manage COVID-19 in our community we are committed to enabling access to whānau for patients in our care and to support outpatients, whilst balancing risk of COVID-19 to our people and the risk of harm of not having whānau visit.

This kaupapa will help us to provide an enduring strategy to promote whānau as partners in care that can respond to the changing risk levels of COVID-19 that meets the needs of our patients and staff whilst balancing the safety and wellbeing risks of us all.

Policy Statement

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, visiting will be restricted at Te Whatu Ora – Capital, Coast and Hutt Valley facilities. We remain committed to enabling access to whānau for patients in our care and to support outpatients, whilst balancing risk of COVID-19 and the risk of harm of not having whānau visit.

This is to ensure the safety of patients and staff by minimising avoidable contact and the potential for spread of the virus.

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Scope

It is important to note that the Government’s COVID-19 Protection Framework serves a different purpose which enables as much care as possible to be delivered safely under all traffic light colours.

This guidance applies to all Te Whatu Ora facilities in the Capital Coast and Hutt Valley district.

This guidance does not extend to visitors to hospital campuses who are on site to provide essential services e.g. interpreters for patients with no or limited English, or Partners in care. Please refer to separate advice on essential services.

This guidance references the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 by providing guidance to support the mitigation of any risk to staff while visitors who meet the criteria visit all workplace facilities.

Includes:

- Public visiting patients within inpatient units
- Public accompanying people to community clinics
- Public accompanying people to any outpatient or ambulatory area/clinic
- Public accompanying people presenting at the Emergency Department
- Public accompanying people requiring maternity services

Charge Nurse/Midwife Managers (or a senior clinician/manager as designated) can assess requests on a case by case basis. For example, exceptions will be considered on compassionate grounds for end of life or therapeutic care.

- This policy does not apply to patients.
- This policy excludes on duty staff, volunteers and contracted workers performing or providing essential services.
- Kaitiaki/Partners in care are not visitors and are able to visit as required. Kaitiaki /partners in care are required to provide evidence of current vaccination status—if Kaitiaki/Partners in care are not vaccinated, they will be required to follow the mask requirements of the area they are in.

Exceptions to this will be managed on a case-by-case basis and are agreed by the Senior Medical Officer managing the patient in partnership with the Clinical Nurse /Midwife Manager / Delegate on shift can assess requests on a case by case basis. For example, exceptions will be considered on compassionate grounds for end of life care.

- The management plan will include the name of the SMO and Clinical Nurse /Midwife Manager / Delegate who approved the exception, numbers of visitors permitted, name and contact details of key whānau liaison, how physical distancing will be maintained and plan on where visitors will wait. Ward family rooms and meeting rooms can be used, at the discretion of the CNM/CMM. The atrium / foyer is not suitable for grieving

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families, so please use other spaces first.

- Visitors need to be managed within their own bubbles, if possible.

Whānau Care services can help with large groups and other support. Capital, Coast they can be contacted on ext. 04 3855999 x 80948 or by emailing wcs@ccdhb.org.nz Hutt Valley [MaoriHealthReferrals \[Hutt Valley\] MaoriHealthReferralsHVDHB@huttvalleydhb.org.nz](mailto:MaoriHealthReferrals[Hutt Valley]@MaoriHealthReferralsHVDHB@huttvalleydhb.org.nz)

Definitions

High risk area – May include but not limited to Emergency Departments (ED), Intensive Care Units (ICU), High Dependency Units (HDU), Health of the Older Persons, Kenepuru Hospital, Maternity wards, Birthing Suites, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU), Mental Health In-patient units, Coronary Care Unit (CCU), Wellington Blood and Cancer Centre (WBCC) and Ward 5 North, Renal Outpatient and Inpatient areas, Immunology, or other Outpatient areas redesignated or identified by the district for the purpose of providing care to patients who have high vulnerability from potential exposure to COVID-19.

Kaumātua - For the purposes of this policy Kaumātua refers to an elder (either male or female) from any ethnicity who holds a revered position in a family or community.

Non-essential visitors - e.g. company representatives, external people attending meetings, people not visiting family / whānau, off-duty staff.

Patient - Member of the public receiving / seeking treatment, this includes mental health service users. This includes inpatients and outpatients.

Support person(s) for Disabled People - People who provide services that should they be interrupted are liable to endanger the life, health, wellbeing or security of people using services in any community we support.

Support person(s) - Required for the purposes of the clinic or hospital visit i.e. Dependent ~~person~~ people with disabilities, needing to deliver bad news. An interpreter is not a support person.

Visitor - Member of the public not receiving assessment, diagnostics or treatment

Whānau spokesperson - The single point of contact for Whānau

Kaitiaki/Partner in care can visit at any time, but this must be in liaison and agreement with clinical Teams **before** visiting.

Kaitiaki/Partners in care are nominated and agreed between the clinical care team and whānau and provide **essential care** for those who are longer-term patients, or patients who require hospital services frequently. They are more involved in the care plan and actively contribute to outcomes.

If you have patients who would meet the above criteria, please discuss with your clinical teams and the patients' whānau. Once agreed, please issue a Kaitiaki /Partner in care card for the person to use during screening at our main entrances.

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Guidelines

There is an expectation that Staff will adhere to the vision and values of their respective organisations. This will include:

- Consideration of respect, partnership, cultural sensitivity and equity, and effective communication.
- All staff will maintain respectful communication with family/whānau, carers and support person/people, treating each person with dignity and respect.
- That staff will be treated with respect and that abuse and aggression toward staff will not be tolerated.
- All staff will partner with family/whānau, carers and support person/people regarding this guidance.
- All staff will work with Māori and Pacific health teams/leaders to ensure cultural supports and aspects of care are considered and actioned.
- Whānau liaison increases as the response level increases.
- Alternative means of communication between patients and whānau/ families are encouraged and enabled.
- Districts will ensure visibility of the expectations on visitors within the facility including:
 - visibility of screening questions and processes
 - limitations such as medical mask wearing at all times
 - restricting movement within the hospital to the place the patient resides with access to and from that place.
- Districts will ensure the visitor guidance is not taken in isolation - it is part of a much wider risk assessment associated with the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the organisation and community
- This guidance provides advice for visitor policies to be implemented at Districts in accordance with their established and agreed incident management team framework and union or health and safety representative engagement forums.
- Changes to this guidance will occur as the environment and science identifies change needed. Any substantial change in direction will follow the usual national engagement process with sign off process

Risk assessment

Capital Coast and Hutt Valley cannot eliminate the risk of introduction and spread of COVID-19 in hospital without removing and restricting all people from the hospital. This is not practical nor is it in the public or patient interest. Districts have introduced several controls e.g. security measures, restricted access to areas, which enable decisions of risk-based trade-offs to maintain patient, worker and visitor safety to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 spread by visitors to hospital facilities. The COVID-19 Hospital & Clinic Patient Visiting Guidance is one of the ways that Districts are minimising the risk of COVID-19 to patients, staff and the wider community.

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Visitors with symptoms

Visitors with acute respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, sore throat, flu like symptoms) or abdominal pain and diarrhoea, or those who have been at a local area of interest or with a household contact to current COVID-19 case must not attend unless prior arrangements are made.

Public information including signage should be in place at all entrances to reflect this. A process should be in place to manage unwell visitors.

While visiting any district facility, visitors will:

- Maintain the appropriate and effective wearing of masks in all public and patient areas
- Maintain physical distancing

Patients admitted with COVID-19

Visiting patients who have been admitted with COVID-19 during the active (infective) period of their infection will be more restrictive and managed on a case by case basis. The reason for this is to ensure that Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) processes are adhered to, and to minimise any risk of avoidable transmission. Other methods of communicating with a patient with COVID-19 should be facilitated as appropriate, such as video conference, FaceTime Zoom, Skype etc.

It is recommended that family/whānau, carers and support person/people must designate a whānau spokesperson who will be the point of contact for the whānau regarding the visiting and any changes to it. Before any visitor can enter an area where there are COVID-19 positive patients, they must be met by an appropriate staff member who will ensure personal hygiene requirements are met, and Personal Protection Equipment is appropriately worn and explanation of the guidance.

Visitors who are household contacts in self-isolation

Anyone a household contact within preceding 7 days will not be able to visit in the usual way and will require specific visiting arrangements to be negotiated.

Vaccination status

Visitors to district facilities will not have to demonstrate vaccination status nor provide evidence of a negative swab or undertake a swab to enter.

High-Risk Areas

If existing visiting policies within high-risk areas are more rigorous than stated in these guidelines, they should be followed.

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People with disabilities

Where visitor restrictions are in place, an exception will be made for people with disabilities who are in hospital or must attend an outpatient appointment where they need a support person.

For example, a sign language interpreter, support person for someone with a learning disability, visitors interpreting for elderly whānau/family members with no/limited English or someone to assist with mobility is allowed in addition to that person's permitted visitor/s. Consideration to be given to those attending appointments for poor or pending prognosis e.g. Cancer.

Outpatients

Support People at Outpatients

Support person(s) for Disabled People - People who provide services that should they be interrupted are liable to endanger the life, health, wellbeing or security of people using services in any community we support.

Support person(s) - Required for the purposes of the clinic or hospital visit i.e. Dependent people with disabilities, and or to provide psychological support such as in the case of returning to clinic for outcome of cancer testing.

The guidance around support people for patients attending outpatient appointments varies at different response stages. Please refer to the guidance at each stage at the back of this document.

Accommodating support people and interpreters at appointments

Deaf people coming to an outpatient appointment is entitled to have a support person if required and an interpreter with them – support people and interpreters play very different roles

This also applies to other disabled people who may bring a support person, or personal assistant who is paid to be their support person. This too is separate to having a support person with them.

Interpreters are not a support person and is always able to attend.

If you have questions, contact disability@ccdhb.org.nz or call 0800 DISABILITY.

Children at Outpatients

Children who attend an outpatient appointment with the parent or sibling whose appointment it is, are permitted if there are no alternatives to childcare available.

A child is able at all stages to have an adult or caregiver accompany them.

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If you have patients who would meet the above criteria, please discuss with your clinical teams and the patients' whānau. Once agreed, please issue a Kaitiaki /Partners in care card for the person to use during screening at our main entrances.

Guidelines

All areas (apart for Cancer Ward 5 North Wellington Hospital): Maximum of 2 adult visitors (>16 years) at any one time and they may be accompanied by up to 2 children (<16 years). Children 12 years and older are expected to wear a mask and all other children are encouraged to wear a mask if able.

Oncology (Cancer) 5 North Wellington Hospital: Maximum of 1 adult visitor (>16 years) at any one time. No children (<12 years) will be permitted to visit at any time.

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