

Policy Name	Inpatient Unit Visitation		
Department Responsible	Compliance	Policy Number	1170
Publication Date	04/06/2024	Version Number	3

I. PURPOSE

To protect a patient’s right to have any and all visitors at their discretion while in a Gulfside Healthcare Services (GHS) Inpatient Unit and to comply with Florida Statute § 408.823.

II. POLICY

Gulfside Healthcare Services (GHS) under normal operations will not limit the number of essential and non-essential visitors a patient may have or the amount of time they may spend with the patient in a 24-hour period.

GHS may limit visitation due to facility maximum occupant load, infection prevention and control requirements, or safety concerns; however, such limitations shall not be more restrictive than those imposed on staff under similar circumstances.

Essential Caregiver Designation: Each patient has the right to designate an Essential Caregiver, which may include a family member, friend, guardian, or other individual of the patient’s choosing.

GHS shall permit in-person visitation by the Essential Caregiver for a minimum of two (2) hours daily, in addition to any other visitation permitted under this policy.

An Essential Caregiver shall not be required to provide necessary patient care or services as a condition of visitation.

GHS will not require visitors to provide direct patient care or services as a condition of visitation.

GHS reserves the right to suspend or restrict visitors who pose a safety or security threat to patients, staff, or others, or who violate GHS policies.

Any such restriction shall be applied in a nondiscriminatory and least-restrictive manner consistent with patient rights and applicable law.

All visitors are also at the patient’s discretion. If a patient declares they do not wish for a particular visitor, or any visitors, to be allowed in, GHS reserves the right to deny these individuals the ability to visit the patient.

Required Visitation Circumstances: In accordance with § 408.823(2)(c), F.S., in-person visitation must be permitted whenever any of the following conditions apply (unless the patient objects):

- End-of-Life: *Imminent end-of-life situations* – Visitation by family and close loved ones shall be allowed without time restriction (e.g., patient’s condition is terminal or critical).

- Psychosocial Support: *Adjustment difficulty* – If a patient recently admitted from living with family is struggling with the change or missing family support, in-person family visitation must be permitted to aid adjustment.
- Major Care Decisions: *Significant medical decisions* – For any period when the patient is facing major medical decision-making, they must be allowed in-person presence of a family member or support person.
- Emotional Distress: *Acute emotional distress or grief* – If a patient is extremely upset or grieving a recent loss, visitation must be allowed for supportive presence.
- Nutritional Support: *Eating/drinking encouragement* – If a patient requires cueing or encouragement to eat/drink that was previously given by a caregiver, that caregiver shall be allowed to visit in person to assist.
- Reduced Communication: *Patient withdrawal* – If a patient who used to be communicative is now seldom speaking, the hospice must allow visitation by loved ones to help engage the patient.
- Pediatric Patients: *Minors in hospice care* – Parents, guardians, or family shall be allowed to visit pediatric hospice patients in person; sibling visitation is also permitted.

Infection Control & Screening: All visitors shall comply with infection control protocols equivalent to those for staff. The hospice must screen visitors for communicable disease symptoms upon entry (e.g., fever or respiratory symptoms) as needed and provide education on infection prevention. Personal protective equipment (PPE) shall be available and required as appropriate (e.g., during outbreaks) for visitors.

Safety related requirements shall not exceed those applied to GHS staff under similar conditions.

No visitor shall be required to show proof of vaccination or immunization or submit to any medical testing as a condition of entry unless otherwise required by applicable law. Consensual physical contact between patients and their visitors shall always be allowed and not unreasonably restricted.

GHS shall maintain this policy for regulatory review and ensure it is readily accessible to patients and families. This policy shall be posted on the organization's website and made available upon request in accordance with Florida Statute § 408.823(2)(f).

The Chief Operating and Business Innovations Officer is responsible for oversight of compliance with this policy and shall designate appropriate administrative or clinical leadership to ensure day-to-day adherence by staff.