Patient Support Person Policy

November 19, 2020

As COVID-19 cases continue to spread across Iowa and our country, MercyOne’s top priority is the safety of our patients, their loved ones, our community and our colleagues.

The following policies are effective November 19, 2020, and apply to all MercyOne locations.

During the COVID crisis, a patient may have a visitor if in accordance with the visitor policy (see MercyOne Phase 1 and Phase 2 visitor guidelines) OR a support person.

Support people are those needed to assist with a patient’s physical or mental well-being while receiving care. All other persons should be considered visitors and comply with MercyOne Phase 1 and Phase 2 visitor guidelines.

Ministries may choose locally to be more restrictive in their visitation and support person practices; ministries may not choose to be less restrictive than what is outlined below for support person and in our MercyOne Phase 1 and Phase 2 visitor guidelines.

HOSPITAL INPATIENTS

- Patients who are admitted to the hospital will be asked to provide the name(s) of a support person – someone who is needed for the patient’s physical and mental well-being. While the patient may identify more than one support person, only one individual will be allowed with a patient per calendar day.
  
  **NOTE:** Notwithstanding the prior sentence, both parents/legal guardians are allowed to support a minor at the same time.

- Support person(s) may stay with the patient 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, although continuous stay is highly discouraged to minimize the risk of illness transmission. Local ministry guidance and restrictions may impact this and should be followed.

- MercyOne colleagues who are acting as support persons to a patient are subject to these guidelines and may not be an additional support person by virtue of their employment.

- The above guidelines are applicable to certain acute care settings. Exceptions to these guidelines include the following:
  
  - Critical Care Departments at the discretion of the local market and leadership.
  
  - Unless a support person must accompany the patient to support the patient’s disability-related needs, or in the case of a minor patient, or unless the patient is imminently dying, no support person(s) are allowed in the COVID-19 unit. Exceptions can be accommodated at the discretion of local leadership as it supports the health and well-being of the patient.

- These guidelines may be changed if necessary for safety reasons.

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT / TRAUMA SERVICES

One support person is allowed until the patient is discharged home or is admitted to an inpatient nursing floor.
MATERNITY CARE
One support person and one certified doula is allowed in the patient’s room to support the care of the mother. This includes Labor & Delivery, Mother/Baby, Maternity Triage and Treatment and OB Emergency.

OUTPATIENT CARE OR TESTING AREAS
One support person is allowed with the patient in the pre-procedure area, in waiting rooms through the duration of the patient’s procedure, and in the post-procedure care area (as clinically allowed) until the patient is discharged or is admitted to an inpatient nursing floor.

OUTPATIENT CLINICS
One support person will be allowed with the patient. Two support person(s) will be allowed if the patient is under the age of 18. Support persons may be in the patient’s room (as clinically allowed) to support the care of the patient, or in clinic areas while following social distancing and masking guidelines.

Patients under the age of 18 may have two support persons (parent or legal guardian) at a time in the patient’s room to support the care of the patient. Up to two support persons may rotate at the discretion of the care team.

SURGERY OR PERIOPERATIVE PROCEDURE
One support person is allowed to support the care of the patient in the following areas only:

- Ambulatory Surgery
- Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory
- Endoscopy
- Infusion
- Pain Center
- Radiology / Imaging
- Wound Care

PATIENT IS IMMINENTLY DYING
Two support persons will be allowed at a time; support persons may rotate at the discretion of the clinical care team. Support persons under the age of 16 may be allowed in this case, at the discretion of the clinical care team.

All support person(s) are required to:

- Be age 16 or older.
- Be free of any signs of illness and will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19. Individuals at high risk for severe disease (e.g., underlying cardiopulmonary disease, poorly controlled diabetes) should not visit.
- Adhere to strict physical distancing guidelines, hygiene protocols and mandatory universal face masks. In some cases, support persons may be required to wear additional personal protective equipment. If a support person does not have their own face mask, MercyOne shall provide a mask, as well as any additional personal protective equipment deemed necessary.
- Continue to wear a properly applied face mask or, if applicable, additional personal protective equipment at all times, including when with a patient.
- Not share masks or personal protective equipment and dispose of masks and equipment as directed.
- Stay in their respective patient’s room, as appropriate, and only be outside of this area during entrance, exit, or if food is obtained from the cafeteria or vending. During some procedures, support persons may be asked to leave.

If a support person refuses to comply with the above, contact Public Safety or your Integrity and Compliance officer.