



BASSETT HEALTHCARE NETWORK COVID-19 SUPPORT PERSON POLICY

Summary

In accordance with New York State Department of Health (NYS-DOH) COVID-19 guidelines, patients in the Bassett Healthcare Network are allowed to have person(s) safely at their bedside outlined in the scenarios below. Please note: At this time, per NYS-DOH and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) guidance, support persons are not currently able to visit hospital cafeterias. We apologize for this inconvenience.

If patients, support persons, or staff members wish to review Bassett Healthcare Network's support person processes, they are welcome to direct inquiries to (607) 547-4537. Bassett Healthcare Network will work closely with patients and their care teams to ensure all needs are being met for everyone's health and safety.

Support Person Definition

A **support person** is defined as a person who is essential to the medical care of a patient. A support person is different than a visitor. Support persons are determined by the patient's care team to be medically necessary to the care of the patient in the hospital setting, Emergency Department, and ambulatory clinics. These individuals are selected by the patient and/or patient's family and approved by the care team. A patient may have up to two support persons on file in their medical record. **Only one support person may be present at a time.**

Patients who may require support persons include those with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and patients with cognitive impairments (like dementia, post-stroke victims, etc.). The support person may be a patient's family member, caregiver, or another individual of their choosing.

Support Person Guidelines in the Inpatient Setting:

Support persons in the inpatient setting are allowed in a limited capacity, at the discretion of a patient's care team, under the following conditions:

- Only one support person may be present, must undergo all screening procedures (temperature check, symptom questionnaire, etc.), and must wear a mask and all other appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) upon entrance to the facility.
- Support persons should be 18 years of age or older, except in rare situations approved by the clinical team.
- Once in the facility, a support person must remain in the patient's room, except when otherwise directed by hospital staff (i.e. during aerosol-generating procedures or other procedures during which non-care team members are usually asked to leave.)
- **Pediatric patients:** The family/caregiver may only designate up to **two** support people for the entirety of their admission; only one support person may be present at a time. Individuals age 70 years or older are not encouraged to be support persons at this time for their safety. **Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Child Protective Services (CPS) workers are considered essential workers (not support persons).*
- **Pregnant patients:** Doulas are considered essential to patient care upon admission, throughout labor, delivery, and the postpartum period, including recovery, until discharge to home. Pregnant patients are allowed a doula in addition to their support person(s).



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- The support person and/or doula will receive COVID-19 testing prior to or on entry to the unit. If the test returns positive, the support person and/or doula will be asked to leave and another support person can be chosen.
- The support person(s) can be any person the patient chooses and may stay in all settings with the patient.

Support Person Guidelines for the Emergency Department:

Support persons in the Emergency Department setting are allowed in a limited capacity, at the discretion of a patient's care team, under the following conditions:

- Only one support person may be present, must undergo all screening procedures (temperature check, symptom questionnaire, etc.), and must wear a mask and all other appropriate PPE upon entrance to the facility.
- Once in the facility, a support person must remain in the patient's room, except when otherwise directed by hospital staff (i.e. during aerosol-generating procedures or other procedures during which non-care team members are usually asked to leave).

Support Person Guidelines for Same-Day Procedures:

Support persons for patients undergoing same-day procedures are allowed in a limited capacity, at the discretion of a patient's care team, under the following conditions:

Outpatient Clinics:

- Only one support person may be present, must undergo all screening procedures (temperature check, symptom questionnaire, etc.), and must wear a mask and all other appropriate PPE upon entrance to the facility.
- Patients undergoing same-day procedures may be accompanied by a support person regardless of the time of the procedure at the discretion of the patient's care team. The support person may remain with the patient through registration and preparatory time, then may reunite with the patient once he or she is in recovery.
- While the patient is undergoing the procedure, the support person may wait in an appropriately designated waiting area (at the discretion of the clinical team) or wait outside in a vehicle or off-campus.
- If the patient is admitted to the hospital post-procedure, the support person may accompany the patient to their hospital room location (the individual must check with staff to register as a designated support person for an inpatient).

Hospitals:

- Only one support person may be present, must undergo all screening procedures (temperature check, symptom questionnaire, etc.), and must wear a mask and all other appropriate PPE upon entrance to the facility.
- Patients undergoing same-day procedures may be accompanied by a support person regardless of the time of the procedure at the discretion of the patient's care team. The support person may remain with the patient through registration and preparatory time, then may reunite with the patient once he or she is in recovery.
- While the patient is undergoing the procedure, the support person may wait in an appropriately designated waiting area (at the discretion of the clinical team) or wait outside in a vehicle or off-campus.



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- If the patient is admitted to the hospital post-procedure, the support person may accompany the patient to their hospital room location (the individual must check with staff to register as a designated support person for an inpatient).

Support Person Guidelines for Inpatient Psychiatry:

Support persons in the Inpatient Psychiatry setting are allowed in a limited capacity, at the discretion of a patient's care team, under the following conditions:

- Only one support person may be present, must undergo all screening procedures (temperature check, symptom questionnaire, etc.), and must wear a mask and all other appropriate PPE upon entrance to the facility.
- Support persons should be 18 years of age or older, except in rare situations approved by the clinical team.
- Once in the facility, a support person must remain in the patient's room, except when otherwise directed by hospital staff (i.e. during aerosol-generating procedures or other procedures during which non-care team members are usually asked to leave.)

Support Person Guidelines for Outpatient Appointments:

Support persons in outpatient clinic settings are allowed in a limited capacity, at the discretion of a patient's care team, under the following conditions:

- Only one support person may be present, must undergo all screening procedures (temperature check, symptom questionnaire, etc.), and must wear a mask and all other appropriate PPE upon entrance to the facility.
- Once in the facility, a support person must remain in the patient's examination room, except when otherwise directed by staff (i.e. during aerosol-generating procedures or other procedures during which non-care team members are usually asked to leave.)
- **OB Ultrasounds:** Obstetrics (OB) patients may have one support person attend an appointment with them while following these conditions:
 - The support person must successfully pass all screenings (temperature check/questionnaire) and be wearing a mask and other appropriate PPE upon entrance to the facility.
 - Support persons may not be children.
 - The patient may designate up to two support persons established (i.e. significant other, spouse, parent of patient, etc.); **only one support person may be present at a time.**

**Note: All pregnant patients for OB ultrasound are entitled to one support person regardless of circumstances.*

Support Person Guidelines for Imminent End-of-Life Situations:

Imminent end-of-life situations are defined as a patient who is actively dying and when death is anticipated to occur within less than 24 hours. **Note: The State of New York does not consider patients on comfort care measures to be imminently dying.*

- The patient and/or family/caregiver may designate up to two support people for the entirety of their admission; **only one support person may be present at a time.**
- In the event the patient is a parent of a minor child, one adult family member and one child may be permitted at the patient's bedside.



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Protective Measures for Support Persons:

Bassett's care team members will discuss the potential risks and benefits of a support person's presence with both the patient (if 18 years of age or older) and the support person, if possible. Individuals age 70 years or older are not encouraged to be designated as support persons at this time due to increased risk of COVID-19.

Support persons will:

- Enter through the facility entrance designated as a screening checkpoint wearing a mask and all other appropriate PPE.
- Perform hand hygiene.
- Complete screening procedures, including:
 - Symptom screening for the prior 14 days (e.g., fever, sore throat, runny nose, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, muscle aches, and/or diarrhea).
 - Temperature check prior to entering the clinical area and every twelve hours thereafter for the remainder of their presence at the bedside.
 - Questionnaires related to travel activity, exposures, previous COVID-19 testing, etc.

Protective Gear for Support Persons:

Upon entry to the facility, all support persons will be required to wear a mask. This can be a cloth mask or a procedure mask. Bassett Healthcare Network is happy to provide a mask if a support person needs one. When support persons arrive to their destination, nursing staff will assist in donning of the appropriate protective gear for the type of patient they will be seeing. This is described as follows:

- Support persons of patients **not** suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19
 - Cloth or procedure mask
- Support persons of patients on precautions
 - All precautionary measures must be followed for patients on isolation precautions.
- Support persons of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19
 - Procedure Mask
 - Eye protection
 - Isolation gown
 - Gloves



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References

New York State. Department of Health. (2020, May 20). *Guidance: COVID-19 Updated Guidance Hospital Operators Regarding Visitation*. Retrieved June 17, 2020 from NYS DOH Information for Healthcare Providers via GPO Access: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-updated-guidance-hospital-operators-regarding-visitation>).

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New York State. Department of Health. (2020, June 17). *Guidance: COVID-19 Hospital Visitation Program*. Retrieved June 17, 2020 from NYS DOH Information for Healthcare Providers via GPO Access: https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/06/hospital-visitation-6_17_20_1.pdf).