



DATE: March 21, 2020

**Health Advisory: COVID-19 Guidance for Hospital Operators Regarding Visitation
Updated Guidance regarding Obstetrical and Pediatric Settings**

On March 18, 2020, the Department issued a health advisory, available on the Department's COVID-19 website, <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/03/covid19-hospital-visitation-guidance-3.18.20.pdf>, regarding hospital visitation restrictions. Effective immediately, hospitals are to suspend all visitation, except when medically necessary (i.e., visitor is essential to the care of the patient) or for family members or legal representatives of patients in imminent end-of-life situations.

For **labor and delivery**, the Department considers **one support person** essential to patient care throughout labor, delivery, and the immediate postpartum period. This person can be the patient's spouse, partner, sibling, doula, or another person they choose. In these settings, this person will be the only support person allowed to be present during the patient's care. This restriction must be explained to the patient in plain terms, upon arrival or, ideally, prior to arriving at the hospital. Hospital staff should ensure that patients fully understand this restriction, allowing them to make a decision about visitation with their potential support persons.

For **Pediatric patients**, the Department considers **one support person** essential to patient care in the emergency room or during hospitalization. In these settings, especially with prolonged hospitalizations, you may designate two support people which alternate visitation. Only one support person may be present at a time. This restriction must be explained to the patient's family/support system in plain terms, upon arrival or, ideally, prior to arriving at the hospital. In the event of the pediatric patient, the family/caregiver must fully understand this restriction. Individuals age 60 years or older, are not encouraged to be support persons at this time due to increased risk of morbidity with COVID-19 infection.

Labor and delivery and pediatric patient support persons **must** be asymptomatic for COVID-19 and must not be a suspect or recently confirmed case. Additionally, hospital staff must screen the support person for symptoms (fever, cough, or shortness of breath) including a temperature check prior to entering the clinical area and every twelve hours after, and for potential exposures to someone with COVID-19. The support person must stay in the room.