

Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Policy and Procedure		
Visitors		
Effective: July 2014	Revised: October 2022	Due for Review: October 2024

POLICY

The Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital (VPCH) recognizes that visitors are valued members of our health care and operational teams, and it is our priority to facilitate hospital visits while protecting the health and safety of those we serve, our personnel, our visitors, and our community. Visitors under 18 years of age shall be pre-approved by a hospitalized person's multidisciplinary treatment team and the Chief Executive Officer, or their designee. VPCH reserves the right to deny visits and limit visiting times.

DEFINITIONS

Visitor: A hospital visitor is defined as any individual who cannot access the facility using their own state issued identification badge and keys. Under unique circumstances, certain visitors may be issued temporary badge access and VPCH keys as deemed appropriate by the Chief Executive Officer, or their designee, (*i.e.*, hospital volunteers, practicum nursing students, nursing instructors, etc.) and access areas of the hospital without an escort. For the purpose of this policy an individual who is issued badge/key access is no longer considered a visitor.

PROCEDURE

- VPCH will make every effort to accommodate any visit, however it is preferable for non-professional visits to be pre-scheduled and arranged to occur during hospital-identified hours of visitation.
- Hospital visitors shall generally enter through our hospital's main entrance.
 - Alternative access points may be arranged to meet safety and operational needs (*i.e.*, emergency personnel, maintenance, or delivery personnel, etc.).
- Hospital personnel shall maintain the confidentiality of persons hospitalized consistent with applicable VPCH policy and procedures and HIPAA. Hospital visitors that may become privy to confidential information during a visit shall sign the *Visitor Acknowledgement Regarding Hospitalized persons Rights to Privacy and Confidentiality* form before entering.
- Personnel welcoming visitors shall confirm whom the visitor intends to visit, verify a government issued form of identification (ID), document required information in accordance with the *VPCH Visitor Log*, complete the applicable acknowledgement and confidentiality forms, and provide temporary visitor badges. Visitors shall be instructed to wear their visitor badge in a visible location throughout the entire visit.
 - Should a visitor not have an ID, the on-duty Nursing Supervisor shall be consulted to review the situation and decide as to whether the visitor shall be admitted.

- Personnel welcoming visitors shall notify the on-duty Charge Nurse that an identified hospitalized person has a visitor. The hospitalized persons will be notified that they have a visitor and asked if they would like to see the visitor.
 - If the hospitalized person declines to see the visitor, the visit should not proceed.
 - If the hospitalized person would like to proceed with the visit, the Charge Nurse or designee will inform personnel welcoming the visitor, and the rest of this procedure shall be followed.
- Personnel welcoming visitors shall conduct a safety search prior to visitor entry – see APPENDIX A for detailed safety guidance for conducting visitor safety searches.
 - If at any time during a safety search personnel believes the risk to their safety or the safety of others is imminent, they should immediately vacate the area to a safe location and notify the authorities of the emergency condition. The Nursing Supervisor on duty shall also be made aware of the circumstances so that proper internal emergency protocols can be enacted as needed.
- Items the visitor will retain, or items intended for the hospitalized persons shall be searched again by assigned direct care personnel.
- Visitors shall be escorted by assigned personnel throughout the duration of the visit.
 - In the event of an emergency, visitors shall follow the directions of VPCH personnel.
- When a visit concludes, assigned personnel shall escort visitors back to the front entrance vestibule, collect any issued badges/locker keys/ hospital keys, and remind visitors to retrieve any belongings in the lockers.
- Assigned personnel are responsible for visitor(s) throughout the entire visit and are required to escort them within areas of the hospital as necessary. Visitors may not be left unattended.

Visitors Under Age 18:

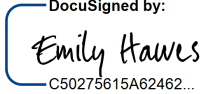
- Visitors under 18 years of age must be pre-approved by the hospitalized person's multidisciplinary treatment team and the Chief Executive Officer, or their designee.
- Visitors under 18 years of age, if authorized, must always be supervised by an accompanying adult visitor. VPCH personnel shall not be responsible for supervising visitors under 18 years of age.
- Visitation with individuals under 18 years of age shall occur off-unit.

Authorized BGS and Delivery Personnel:

Delivery and other service personnel who enter the hospital through the loading dock or storeroom area shall always be accompanied by hospital personnel while in the facility. For these authorized visits, some provisions of this policy and procedure may not apply.

Professional Visitors:

- Professional visitors are also encouraged to schedule their visits in advance, if possible, with the hospitalized person’s treatment team and/or the Department of Mental Health Legal team. If the visit is not scheduled in advance, the Nurse Supervisor shall be consulted to determine whether the hospitalized persons is willing and/or able to have a visitor or if the visit might be required (*i.e.*, service of legal documents).
- Hospital personnel or contracted physicians who expect a visitor for a hospitalized persons shall inform Reception and Admissions in advance of the visit.
- If hospital personnel or a contracted physician is not present when their visitor arrives, Reception/Admissions shall call the personnel or contractor to alert them of their visitor’s arrival.

Approved by:	Signature:	Date:
Emily Hawes Commissioner Vermont Department of Mental Health	 DocuSigned by: <i>Emily Hawes</i> C50275615A62462...	10/11/2022

APPENDIX A

Personnel Guidelines for Conducting a Visitor Safety Search

- Visitor safety searches consist of dialogue with visitors about hospital safety, security, and restricted items that visitors may have with them as well as metal detection.
- Visitor safety searches shall generally be conducted in the first vestibule of the main hospital entrance.
- Visitor safety searches should NOT be conducted without the assigned personnel first making a second personnel aware of their location. VPCH personnel shall maintain certification in Professional Adult Crisis Training (ProACT) to sustain the skills necessary to evaluate the level of safety situations may present based on an individuals' verbal and non-verbal cues.
 - If personnel is uncomfortable with carrying out the steps of a visitor safety search due to safety concerns (*i.e.*, visitor is angry, confrontational, confused, threatening, etc.) they should NOT enter the vestibule with the visitor and should call the supervisor or any on duty administrator for assistance in managing the situation.
 - If personnel is in the vestibule and a threat becomes evident, they should excuse themselves, vacate the area, and notify the on-duty supervisor of their concern.
 - If a threat is immediate, they can activate emergency response by pressing the emergency button on the wand and/or on the wall and vacate the area of the immediate threat.
 - If a visitor does not consent to the safety search, assigned personnel shall remove themselves from the vestibule to notify the on-duty Nursing Supervisor. The visitor may be denied access to the hospital until either the person consents to the safety search or the CEO or designee personally reviews the situation and makes a determination.
- To conduct a visitor safety search, assigned personnel shall verbally review applicable VPCH safety process and inquire if the visitor may have items with them that would not be safe to bring into the facility including, but not limited to, the following:
 - VPCH does not generally permit food items. If allowed, food items shall be consumed at the time of the visit and any food items left over shall be disposed of or taken home with visitor.
 - Drinks must be in plastic sealed containers (no aluminum or glass) and no caffeine drinks will be permitted by VPCH personnel before 0500 or after 1300.
 - Lockers are available for any visitor items that are not authorized.
- The search would then proceed to visual examination of contents of containers, bags, boxes, pockets, or other containers that a visitor intends to be brought to the hospitalized persons or on a unit.
- Visitors and items entering the facility are then metal detected. If the metal detector alerts, the assigned personnel shall ask the visitor to make the item visible or may ask for consent to visualize the area/contents in question.
 - If a visitor does not consent to search or to reveal an item that the metal detector alerted to, assigned personnel shall vacate the vestibule and notify the on-duty Nursing Supervisor.

- The visitor may be denied access to the hospital until such time as either the search is completed, or the CEO or designee personally reviews the situation and makes a determination about the safety of proceeding with a visit.
- If/when contraband/restricted items are found and not perceived as an immediate threat, personnel shall explain VPCH's contraband policy and ask the visitor(s) to either return their items to their vehicle or secure the items in one of the vestibule lockers.
- If a personnel member finds a weapon in the person's possession, the personnel member shall leave the potential visitor in outer entrance area and access a safe location to call the nursing supervisor and/or emergency responders.
- Assigned personnel welcoming visitors shall inform direct care personnel of any items intended for the direct care areas. If the visitor asks to visit the unit or the hospitalized persons before assigned personnel can complete search of items intended for the hospitalized persons, the assigned personnel may leave these items in the Reception area. When the assigned personnel is available, they shall return to the Reception area to continue the search and determine which, if any, items are suitable to bring to the direct care area.
- The Charge Nurse or designee shall conduct a second review and inventory of these items. The Charge Nurse or designee shall complete the second review process in a timely manner and shall make every effort to complete the review before the visitor departs so items can be taken back with them as necessary.

Note: Personnel shall contact the on-duty nursing supervisor with any questions regarding visitors and/or compliance with this policy.