

# Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Procedure

## Visitor Procedure

REVISED X

Date: June 9, 2021

**Note:** Staff shall contact the nursing supervisor with any questions regarding visitors and/or compliance with this policy. It is the goal of VPCH to assist visitors in the most supportive way possible while promoting safety and security and adhering to our policies and procedures.

1. All visitors to the hospital (except for authorized BGS staff and delivery service personnel) shall enter through the front door of the hospital.
2. All visits shall be scheduled in advance with a member of the patient's treatment team. If the visit is not scheduled in advance, the Nurse Supervisor shall be consulted to determine if staffing levels allow for the entry of visitors and whether the patient is willing and/or able to have a visitor.
3. The visitor shall inform Reception who they are there to visit and show a form of government issued ID. Should the visitor not have an ID, the Nursing Supervisor shall be consulted to personally review the situation and decide as to whether or not the visitor shall be admitted.
  - a. Visitor of a Patient:
    - i. Reception shall notify the charge nurse that the patient has a visitor. The charge nurse shall alert the patient to the visitor and ask the patient if they would like to see the visitor.
      1. If the patient says no, the charge nurse will inform Reception, who will then relay that information to the visitor and ask them to return later.
      2. If the patient says yes, the charge nurse will inform Reception, and the rest of this procedure shall be followed.
  - b. Visitors Under 18 Years Old
    - i. Visitors under 18 years old (minors) must be pre-approved by the Patient's Treatment Team.
    - ii. An approved minor must be accompanied and supervised by an adult at all times. VPCH staff shall not be responsible for supervising minors.
    - iii. Visits by minors shall occur off unit.

- c. Professional Visitors:
  - i. Professional visitors should attempt to schedule their visits in advance, if possible, with the patient's treatment team or DMH Legal. If the visit is not scheduled in advance, the Nurse Supervisor shall be consulted to determine whether the patient is willing and/or able to have a visitor.
  - ii. Hospital employees or contracted physicians who expect a visitor for a patient shall inform Reception (or Admissions if they are covering for Reception) in advance of the visit.
  - iii. If the hospital employee or contracted physician is not present when their visitor arrives, Reception shall call the employee or contractor to alert them of their visitor's arrival.
- 4. Reception shall sign the visitor into the Visitor Log and provide a temporary badge to the visitor. The visitor shall wear the badge in a visible location throughout the entire visit. The visitor must sign the *Visitor Acknowledgement Regarding Patient Rights to Privacy and Confidentiality* form and complete the Visitor Screen for Infectious Symptoms of Concern before entering the lobby.
  - a. An assigned staff member or contracted physician shall meet the visitor in the outer entrance area. All visitors must lock up their personal belongings (cell phone, keys, wallet/purse, etc.) in a locker and shall be provided with a locker key unless the Nurse Supervisor determines there is a clinical or legal need to bring certain items into patient care areas.
- 5. Under certain circumstances, such as a global pandemic response or the presence of other highly transmissible illnesses, visitors may be required to adhere to additional infection control practices, such as confirming vaccination status, wearing a medical mask at all times while in the facility, or wearing other types of personal protective equipment. Visitors who are unwilling to adhere to the additional infection control practices will not be permitted in the building.
- 6. All visitors shall be wanded before exiting the outer entrance area by assigned staff. All visitors will have their temperature taken before exiting the outer entrance area as indicated for the prevention of spreading infectious pathogens with pandemic potential.
  - a. If an individual does not consent to a search or temperature screen, assigned staff shall call a nursing supervisor. The person shall be denied access to the hospital until either the person consents to a search or temperature screen, or the CEO or designee personally reviews the situation and makes a determination.
  - b. If the wand goes off, assigned staff shall ask consent to manually search the area in question.
    - i. If consent is given, staff shall manually search the area. If they do not find any prohibited items, the person may be allowed to enter the hospital. If

they do find a prohibited item, it must be locked in a locker while the visitor is at VPCH.

1. If a staff member finds a weapon in the person's possession, the staff member shall immediately leave the potential visitor in outer entrance area, return to Reception, and call the nursing supervisor.
  - ii. If consent is not given, assigned staff shall call a nursing supervisor. The person shall be denied access to the hospital until such time as either the person consents to a search or the CEO or designee personally reviews the situation and makes a determination.
- c. If the temperature screen indicates the visitor has a fever (temperature of 100°F or higher), the visitor will be given the option to wait 5 minutes in the outer vestibule prior to taking their temperature again. Visitors will be provided with a medical mask to wear during this time. Visitors whose second temperature reading continues to indicate a fever will not be permitted entry to the building.
- d. Once in the Reception Area, assigned staff shall open and examine the contents of all containers, bags, boxes, or other containers that a visitor intends to be brought to the patient or on a unit. Please see a list of restricted items in *Restricted Items and Search Procedure*. If there are any questions, contact the nursing supervisor.
- e. Assigned staff shall advise visitors that any food brought in for the patient must be consumed at the time of the visit and that leftovers must be taken home (unless approved by the Charge Nurse to be saved; see *Food Guidelines*).
- f. Drinks must be in plastic sealed containers (no aluminum or glass) and no caffeine drinks will be permitted by VPCH staff before 0500 or after 1300.
- g. Assigned staff shall bring the approved items to the unit and give them to the Charge Nurse or designee for a second review and inventory. 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 leaves the unit.
- h. If the visitor asks to visit the unit or the patient before assigned staff is able to complete the container examination, the assigned staff may leave the containers at Reception while s/he escorts the visitor to the unit vestibule. When the assigned staff is no longer needed at the unit, and the visitor has been escorted by nursing staff onto the unit, the assigned staff shall return to the Reception area to continue the container review and determine which, if any, items are suitable to bring to the unit.

7. Assigned staff or hospital employee or contractor shall escort the visitor to the unit vestibule where unit staff will meet the visitor and escort them to the visitors' room or other appropriate location, as determined by the Charge Nurse.
8. When the visit ends, the Charge Nurse shall assign a staff member or contact the contracted physician (if not present during the visit) to escort the visitor back to the Reception area. Assigned staff shall remind visitors to retrieve any belongings in the lockers. The Reception staff will open the sally port and exterior doors so the visitor can exit the locked areas of the hospital. If the visitor left possessions in a locker, the visitor shall retrieve their possessions and then pass the locker key to the Reception staff before departing the building.
9. The employee or contractor is responsible at all times for their visitor and required to always escort them within areas of the hospital as necessary.
10. At all times during the visit, employees and contracted physicians shall maintain the confidentiality of all VPCH patients consistent with all VPCH policy and procedures.
11. VPCH reserves the right to limit or adjust visiting times as several factors can affect the length of a visit (*i.e.* availability of visiting space, staff considerations, other patient needs on the unit, etc.)
12. In addition to the above procedures, hospital employees and contracted physicians must follow the attached Appendix A – Guidelines for employees Hosting Visitors to, or Through, a Patient Care Area.
13. Delivery and Other Service Personnel Who Enter the Hospital though the Loading Dock or Storeroom Entrances
  - a. Delivery and other service personnel who enter the hospital though the loading dock or storeroom area shall be accompanied by a hospital employee at all times while in the building. The visitor does not have to be wanded.
14. At all times during the visit, hospital employees shall maintain the confidentiality of all VPCH patients consistent with all VPCH policy and procedures.
15. In the event if an emergency, visitors shall follow the directions of VPCH personnel.

Approved by	Signature	Approval Date
Sarah Squirrell, Commissioner of DMH		