

<b>POLICY</b> 1.10	<b>Family Presence: Designated Family/Support Person (DSP) and Visitor Access</b>	<b>DOMAIN</b> Governance and Ethics
<b>SLT Sponsor:</b> Chief Quality and Privacy Officer  <b>Policy Lead(s):</b> Corporate Director, Quality, Patient Safety & Experience and Manager, Patient Relations		<b>Date Approved:</b> July 11, 2022
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**NOTE:** The first appearance of terms in bold in the body of this document (except titles) are defined terms – please refer to the Definition section

**Policy Statement:**

Covenant Health acknowledges the social nature of care and the role of family as an integral dimension of the patient and resident<sup>1</sup> experience. Therefore, at Covenant Health there is a presumption in favour of **family presence** as the standard of care.

Exceptions are necessary when patient, resident and staff safety, quality, privacy and other factors determine limitations.

Alberta Health Services policy document – **HCS-199 – Family Presence: Designated Family/Support Person and Visitor Access** – is adapted for use by Covenant Health.

**Purpose Statement:**

- To set the standard practice for family presence in Covenant Health facilities.
- To set the expectation for safe **Designated Family/Support Person (DSP)** and **visitor** practices across Covenant Health Sites.
- To differentiate between the roles of a DSP and visitor.

**Applicability:**

The policy suite is applicable when arranging visitation for patients, residents, DSPs and visitors at all Covenant Health facilities.

This Policy Suite does not apply to individuals who are remanded, intermittent or sentenced servers in custody in an Alberta Federal or Provincial Correctional Facility, who receive health services at a Covenant Health facility. Correctional Services individuals fall under the authority of the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General or Justice Canada.

**Responsibility:**

All Covenant Health facilities, staff, medical staff, students, volunteers and any other persons acting on behalf of Covenant Health.

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter, all references to 'patients' includes residents and clients.

### Principles:

Covenant Health supports **patient** experience through **patient, resident and family-centred care**. Covenant Health recognizes the need to involve DSPs as essential partners in the provision of safe, quality patient care. Covenant Health supports the presence of a patient's DSP(s) and visitor(s), while balancing the safety of all patients, DSPs, visitors, and Covenant Health representatives.

Covenant Health is committed to patient, resident and family-centred care, and the role of DSP as essential partners in the provision of safe, quality patient care.

This commitment is aligned with the Health Ethics Guide, and the call to foster trust in care, recognizing each person's emotional, familial, cultural and spiritual relationships.

At times, reasonable accommodations will be necessary to limit family presence due to proportionate quality and safety considerations. However, the call to foster trust nevertheless requires respectful communication with family to provide a rationale why this is necessary, and, exploration of alternative means to facilitate safe, meaningful contact (i.e., virtual presence).

### ELEMENTS

#### 1. Designated Family/Support Persons (DSPs)

- 1.1 Family presence means the mindset, practice, and support systems in place that ensures DSPs are involved as essential partners in care, and welcomed to participate and collaborate with **health care providers** in providing safe and quality health care services to patients, whenever the patient desires.
  - a) DSPs are not visitors.
  - b) Covenant Health recognizes that patients have the right to have DSP involved in their care.
- 1.2 Upon initiation of a health service, as appropriate, the health care team shall document the name(s), contact information, and preferred roles of the DSP(s) that the patient identifies in the patient's **health record**. These preferred roles include, but are not limited to the following:
  - a) with whom the patient would like health information to be shared;
    - (i) Sharing of health information shall be done in accordance with the Health Information Act (Alberta), and Covenant Health confidentiality, information,

and privacy policies.

- b) with whom the patient would like to collaborate on health decisions;
  - (i) Decision-making shall be consistent with policy VII-B-50 Covenant Health Consent to Treatment/Procedure(s) policy suite and VII-B-350 Advance Care Planning and Goals of Care Designation policy and procedure.
- c) with whom the patient would like to be physically present in the patient care environment, including but not limited to, during appointments, home visits, and overnight stays in Covenant Health settings;
  - (i) The DSP(s) shall have 24/7 access. If a limit is required, refer to 1.10.PROC.1 Managing Limits to Designated Family/Support Person (DSP) and Visitor Access procedure.
  - (ii) The DSP(s) must be able to safely and independently manage their own personal needs (e.g., food, medications, personal care).
  - (iii) In the event of space **limits** in the patient care environment, the patient, their DSP(s), and health care team shall collaborate to determine options for where and when the patient and DSP(s) may be physically present together considering patient care needs and available space.
  - (iv) If it is not possible for the DSP(s) to be physically present with a patient (e.g., public health limits, geography), Covenant Health staff shall provide options for partnering with the health care team and supporting the patient (e.g., virtual connections).
  - (v) Although specific decision-makers may offer insight to a patient about their social network, they do not have the legal authority to decide with whom the patient may associate with.
- d) with whom the patient prefers to be physically present during acute clinical deterioration and/or resuscitation. Refer to VII-B-365 Family Presence During Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) policy suite. In the event of acute clinical deterioration and/or resuscitation, an assigned staff member shall:
  - (i) invite the d DSP(s) to be present;
  - (ii) notify the health care team that the d DSP(s) are present;
  - (iii) ensure the safety and well-being of the DSP(s) during the event;

- (iv) explain what is happening to the designated DSP(s) during the event;
- (v) continually assess the DSP(s) preference to be present during the event; and
- (vi) offer to arrange post-event support for the DSP(s).

- 1.3 In the event of a communication barrier between the health care team and the patient, the health care team shall engage appropriate communication assistance or an interpretation service to obtain the contact information and preferred roles of the DSP(s).
- 1.4 Although the patient may identify their preferred roles of their DSP(s), the DSP(s) may also decide what patient-identified roles they want to participate in. The health care team shall respect the decision of the DSP(s) to participate or not participate in the patient's care.

## **2. Visitors**

- 2.1 Covenant Health recognizes that visitors have a unique role in providing temporary support to the patient but are not essential partners in care. Visitors are different from DSPs.
- 2.2 The patient and health care team shall discuss the best time for the patient's visitor(s) to be present.

## **3. Supporting Family Presence: Responsibilities for Health Care Providers**

- 3.1 In keeping with Covenant Health Values, the responsibilities for health care providers regarding DSPs and visitors include, but are not limited to:
- a) creating a welcoming and supportive environment for family presence;
  - b) treating all patients and their DSP(s) and visitor(s) with respect, including being sensitive to diversity and the unique needs of individuals and groups;
  - c) maintaining the dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of patients, residents and their DSP(s) and visitor(s) by:
    - (i) asking patients to have a conversation in that time and place. Health care providers may offer to have a conversation with the patient in a private area or alternative time, if the patient prefers; and
    - (ii) informing patients and their DSP(s) and visitor(s) of the guidance regarding photographs, video recordings, or audio recordings. Refer to X-70 Use of Electronic Monitoring, Recording Devices and Cameras by Patients, Residents

and Alternate Decision Makers policy suite.

- d) informing patients and their DSP(s) and visitor(s) of space and resources that may support their in-person presence with the patient;
- e) listening to and considering the ideas, requests, questions, and concerns of patients and their DSP(s) and visitor(s), and responding in a compassionate and timely manner;
- f) informing patients, their DSP(s) and visitor(s) how to support a culture of safety and respect in health care environments, as per Section 4 below and II-145 Workplace Abuse and Harassment policy suite;
- g) sharing with patients and their DSP(s) and visitor(s) the opportunities and resources to support the patient's cultural, spiritual, or religious practices;
- h) discussing available options that may enhance communication between patients and their DSP(s) and visitor(s);
- i) facilitating virtual options for patients and their DSP(s) and visitor(s) where in-person options are not available;
- j) sharing transparent information about site access requirements, including any limits in place; and
- k) informing and teaching patients and their designated DSP(s) and visitor(s) about infection prevention and control processes required prior to, or while spending time with a patient.
  - (i) The health care provider shall advise the DSP(s) and visitor(s) to postpone spending time with the patient if the designated family and support person(s) or visitor(s) have symptoms of an illness or have recently been exposed to a communicable disease.

#### 4. **Supporting Family Presence: Responsibilities for Designated Family and Support Persons (DSP) and Visitors**

4.1 The responsibilities for DSPs and visitors include, but are not limited to:

- a) demonstrating **respectful behaviour** towards health care providers, patients, DSPs, visitors, and Covenant Health property;

- b) being sensitive to the privacy of health care providers and other patients and their DSP(s) and visitor(s) when taking photographs, video recordings, or audio recordings. Refer to X-70 Use of Electronic Monitoring, Recording Devices and Cameras by Patients, Residents and Alternate Decision Makers policy suite;
- c) maintaining safe and restful care environments for patients, especially in shared spaces and during designated quiet times;
- d) following all access requirements for the site, including but not limited to, wearing **personal protective equipment (PPE)**, performing **hand hygiene**, and postponing in-person visiting while ill;
- e) wearing DSP or visitor identification; and
- f) providing accurate information, concerns, or questions regarding the patient's wellness with the health care team.

## 5. Managing Limits

- 5.1 Refer to 1.10.PROC.1 Managing Limits to Designated Family/Support Person (DSP) and Visitor Access procedure when limits are being considered or applied.

### Definitions:

**Designated family / support person(s) (DSP)** means one or more individuals identified by the patient or resident as an essential support, and who the patient wishes to be included in any encounters with the health care system, including, but not limited to, family, relatives, friends and informal or hired caregivers.

**Family presence** means the mindset, practice, and support systems in place that ensures designated family / support person(s) are involved as essential partners in care, and welcomed to participate and collaborate with health care providers in providing safe and quality health care services to patients whenever the patient desires.

**Hand hygiene** means proper practices which remove micro-organisms with or without soil from the hands (refers to the application of alcohol-based hand rub or the use of plain/antimicrobial soap, and water hand washing).

**Health care provider** means any person who provides goods or services to a patient, inclusive of health care professionals, staff, students, volunteers and other person(s) acting on behalf of or in conjunction with Covenant Health.

**Health record** means the collection of all records documenting individually identifying health information in relation to a single person.

**Limits** means restrictions to partnership, participation, information sharing and/or physical access to a patient, environment, or service.

**Patient** means all persons, inclusive of residents and clients, who receive or have requested health care or services from Alberta Health Services and its health care providers. Patient also means, where applicable:

- a) a co-decision-maker with the person; or
- b) an alternate decision-maker on behalf of the person.

**Patient, resident and family-centred care** means care provided working in partnership with patients and families by encouraging active participation of patients and families in all aspects of care, as integral members of the patient’s care and support team, and as partners in planning and improving facilities and services. Patient and family-centred care applies to patients of all ages and to all areas of health care.

**Personal protective equipment (PPE)** means any specialized clothing or safety items worn by individuals prior to contact with potential or identified hazards, such as from a direct exposure to blood, tissue, and/or body fluids.

**Respectful behaviour** means behaviour that shows due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of others. Respectful behaviours support a safe, healthy, and inclusive workplace and are aligned with Covenant Health’s Code of Conduct, the principles of a just culture, and the Covenant Health Values.

**Visitor** means an individual who spends time with the patient or resident for a temporary period for the purposes of providing support to the patient, and is not an essential partner to care planning and/or decision-making.

<b>Relevant Covenant Health Policy and Policy Support Documents:</b>	
<b>A.</b>	<p><b>Policies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>III-95 Patient/Resident Concerns Resolution Process</li> <li>VII-B-50 Covenant Health Consent to Treatment/Procedure(s)</li> <li>X-70 Use of Electronic Monitoring, Recording Devices and Cameras by Patients, Residents and Alternate Decision Makers</li> <li>VII-B-350 Advance Care Planning and Goals of Care Designation</li> <li>VII-B-365 Family Presence During Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)</li> </ul>
<b>B.</b>	<p><b>Procedures:</b></p>

	1.10.PROC.1 Managing Limits to Designated/Family Support Person (DSP) and Visitor Access
<b>C.</b>	<b>Guidelines:</b>
<b>D.</b>	<b>Job aids:</b> 1.10.JOBAID.1 Family Presence Checklist 1.10.JOBAID.2 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Transitioning from COVID-19 Directives to the Family Presence Policy Suite
<b>E.</b>	<b>Standards:</b>
<b>Keywords:</b>	
<b>Adapt/Adopt</b> Alberta Health Services Policy Document – HCS-199 – Family Presence: Designated Family/Support Person and Visitor Access – is adapted for use by Covenant Health	
<b>References:</b> <b>Alberta Health Services Resources:</b> Guidelines for Outbreak Prevention, Control and Management in Acute Care and Facility Living Sites Patient First Strategy <b>Non-Alberta Health Services Documents:</b> Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Alberta) Health Information Act (Alberta)	
<b>Past Revisions:</b> NEW	