

**ESSEX COUNTY HOSPITAL CENTER**  
**Cedar Grove, New Jersey**

<b><u>MANUAL:</u> Administrative</b>		<b><u>POLICY NUMBER:</u> HC 218</b>	
<b><u>TITLE:</u> Visitation</b>		<b><u>SCOPE:</u> Hospital Wide</b>	
<b><u>DATE APPROVED:</u> 4/2015</b>		<b><u>DATE REVISED/EFFECTIVE:</u> 4/2015 12/2016, 12/2019, 9/2020, 11/2022, 12/2025</b>	
<b><u>KEYWORDS:</u> Visitors</b>			

**OVERVIEW**

ECHC encourages the visitation of patients' family, friends, healthcare agents, partners, or other surrogates to visit and participate in decisions, treatment, and daily care plans as determined by the patient. Visitors to the hospital staff are allowed, provided the safety and security of the environment is maintained.

**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to outline a welcoming procedure for visitors to the Essex County Hospital Center while ensuring hospital security and patient privacy.

**II. POLICY**

The Essex County Hospital Center's Governing Body requires the facility to provide a safe and secure environment for patients and staff, and to maintain protection for equipment and property. Visitors must follow all visitation rules.

**Patient Visitations**

The classrooms on the ground floor are used as a visitors' lounge during designated visiting times. Additionally, the courtyard next to the security desk can serve as a visiting area. Permission for emergency visits or visits outside scheduled hours must be obtained from the Medical Director, Director of Nursing, designated administrator, Patient's Psychiatrist, or Team. No visitation is permitted within individual patient sleeping rooms.

Community-based treatment and case management providers may conduct visits on patient care units, provided the visits are scheduled in advance.

Additionally:

- Patients may refuse to receive a visitor.
- All materials that are brought to patients or onto the Unit are subject to a safety search for contraband.
- Patients may receive a maximum of 4 visitors at a time.
- An adult visitor must accompany visitors under the age of 18. Visitors under the age of 14 must have permission from the treatment psychiatrist and medical director prior to the visit. Minors may not be left unaccompanied in the Lobby or any other areas of the Hospital.

- Visitors are not permitted to bring food items into the hospital during their visit. These items are prohibited due to potential clinical, dietary, safety, and/or infection control risks to patients.
- Essex County Hospital Center reserves the right to cancel scheduled visits due to inclement weather, disease outbreaks, or other emergent circumstances

### **Staff Visitations**

Individuals who visit staff here at ECHC must sign in, present photo identification, and advise the security officer whom they are visiting. The security officer calls the staff member or department to verify if they are expecting the visitor; if approved, the employee must come to the lobby to escort their visitor. Staff visitors are not permitted on patient care units unless authorized personnel allow it. The visitor must wait in the lobby until the employee arrives to escort them.

### **All Visitations**

- Visitors are expected to be free from fever, colds, and/or communicable diseases.

Upon entry into the Hospital, visitors are not permitted to leave the lobby area, including restrooms, or to enter further into the hospital until approved to visit. No individual may remain on Hospital property without authorization. Individuals denied authorization will be asked to leave. Individuals seeking to remain without authorization will be referred to Security and the Essex County Sheriff for removal.

All Visitors are required to sign in and out at the Security desk. All employees of the State of New Jersey and County of Essex, Public Defenders Office, Division of Mental Health, and Guardianship Advocacy are required to openly and properly display their authorized identification badges whenever they are on the Hospital Center grounds or in the buildings. Contractors and non-County employees coming into the Hospital to engage in service or repair work are required to sign in and out at the Security desk. They are issued special contractor passes to be worn in a prominent place while in the buildings or on the grounds. Essex County Employees with appointments at the Employee Health Clinic will follow the same visitors' guidelines.

### **III. DEFINITIONS**

Visitor- A "visitor" is defined as a guest of a patient, the hospital, or the hospital's employees.

### **IV. PROCEDURE**

#### **Patient Visitations**

The Psychiatrists and Treatment Teams, along with the patient,

- May identify preferred visitors and encourage family visits.
- May restrict visits when clinically indicated and document the reason for the restriction in the patient's record.

- Discuss the restriction with the patient and their family, explaining the reason. Extend the restriction as necessary and document the reason in the patient's record.
- Discuss extending restrictions with the patient and family.

The security officer calls the Unit to verify with the nurse that the visitor is on the patient's approved visitor list and may see the patient. If approved, the security officer arranges for an escort with the nurse on the Unit and requests that the visitors wait for the patient in the lobby. For the safety of patients on the unit, a staff member, designated by the nurse, thoroughly inspects all packages or other items brought into the Hospital before giving them to the patient. \*Note: During evenings, weekends, and holidays, the ADN, in collaboration with the nurse in charge, will determine when to respond to a visitor's emergency request to visit if it occurs after normal visiting hours.

### **All Visitations**

Visitors announce themselves at the Security Desk, just inside the main entrance of the lobby. All visitors must pass through the lobby magnetometer and have all personal belongings inspected. The security officer informs the visitor that all weapons, including firearms and sharps, are strictly prohibited throughout the facility. Such property must be registered with the Security Department and left with them for safekeeping. This includes law enforcement officers, with the only exception being Sheriffs' Officers stationed in the "courtroom" during mental health court, who are required by the Superior Courts of NJ to carry a firearm. Security reserves the right to ask visitors to remove prohibited items from the building and return them to their vehicles.

If an individual is found trespassing, the Security Officer escorts them out of the building and/or off the grounds and notifies the Essex County Sheriff if the individual refuses to leave or causes a disturbance.

### **V. REFERENCES**

### **VI. CROSS REFERENCES**

HC-212- Contraband- Attachment- Contraband List