

**Mount Sinai Beth Israel**  
Administrative Policy & Procedure Manual  
Policy No. 2023

**POLICY TITLE:** Visitation Rights

**PURPOSE:** To delineate Mount Sinai Beth Israel policy on visitors to inpatient units. To ensure that all visitors of patients enjoy equal visitation privileges consistent with patient preferences and subject to the Hospital's justified clinical restrictions (see 'Definitions')..

**POLICY:** Mount Sinai Beth Israel policy respects the rights of patients to choose who may visit them when they are an inpatient of this hospital. This policy applies to the Hospital, its physicians, nurses, and other clinical staff members and personnel involved in the decision-making process with respect to patient visitation.

**A. Visitation Rights:**

- Visitation rights include the right, subject to patient consent, to receive the visitors whom he/she designates, including, but not limited to, a spouse, a domestic partner (including a same-sex domestic partner), another family member or a friend, and the right to withdraw or deny such consent at any time.
- Visitation shall only be restricted when it has been determined to be clinically justified, or:
  - To protect the patient or others from injury.
  - To prevent deterioration of the patient's condition.
  - To prevent infringement on the rights of others.
  - To prevent damage to the environment.
  - To support the wishes and requests of the patient.
- Patients shall be informed of their visitation rights, including any clinical restriction or limitation on such rights, upon admission.
- Visitors shall not be restricted, limited or otherwise denied on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.
- Visitors shall enjoy full and equal visitation privileges consistent with patient (or support person) preferences.

**B. Selection of Visitors:**

- The Hospital shall accept verbal confirmation from a patient of individuals who should be received as visitors of the patient and individuals who should be denied visitation rights.
- The Hospital may document such information in the patient's medical record for future reference.

- In the event the patient is a minor, the legal parent/guardian shall be given the opportunity to verbally designate the individuals permitted to visit the minor patient.

**C. Selection of a Support Person:**

- A patient may verbally designate a Support Person to exercise the patient's visitation rights on his or her behalf, should the patient be unable to do so.
- Upon such designation, the legal status of the relationship between the patient and the designated Support Person shall be irrelevant. This designation however does not extend to medical decision-making.
- In the event the patient is unable to exercise his or her visitation rights, the Hospital shall recognize the Support Person's verbal directive as to who should be admitted as visitors of the patient and individuals who should be denied visitation rights with respect to such patient.

**D. Incapacitated Patients:**

- In the event a patient is unable to select visitors due to incapacitation and such patient has not designated a Support Person, the Hospital may consider the following non-exhaustive forms of proof to establish the appropriateness of a visitor or to designate a Support Person when two or more individuals claim to be the incapacitated patient's Support Person:
  - 1) An advance directive naming the individual as a Support Person, approved visitor, or designated decision maker (regardless of the State in which the directive is established;
  - 2) Shared residence;
  - 3) Shared ownership of a property or business;
  - 4) Financial interdependence;
  - 5) Marital/relationship status;
  - 6) Existence of a legal relationship (may be a legal relationship recognized in another jurisdiction, even if not recognized in the Hospital's jurisdiction, including: parent-child, civil union, marriage, or domestic partnership);
  - 7) Acknowledgement of a committed relationship (e.g., an affidavit); Written documentation of the patient's chosen individual even if it is not a legally recognized advance directive

**E. Justified Clinical Restrictions:**

- The Hospital may impose restrictions on a patient's visitation rights.
- When restricting visitation rights, the Hospital shall explain to the patient (or Support Person) the reasons for the restrictions or limitations on the visitation rights and how the Hospital's visitation policies are aimed at protecting the health and safety of all patients.
- All restrictions and their justifications shall be documented in the patient's medical record.
- Hospital staff will re-evaluate the need to continue restricted visitation rights on a regular basis. It is the goal of all staff to remove restricted visitation rights within the earliest timeframe possible.

**F. Grievance:**

- If any patient of the hospital believes that his or her visitation rights have been violated, they may file a complaint with Patient Representative at 212 420-3818 (Petrie), 718-951-3005 (KHD).

**Definitions:**

**Justified clinical restrictions** – any clinically necessary or reasonable restriction or limitation imposed by the Hospital on a patient’s visitation rights which restriction or limitation is necessary to provide safe care to patient or other patients. May include, but not limited to:

- 1) A court order limiting or restraining contact;
- 2) Behavior presenting a direct risk or threat to the patient, Hospital staff, or others in the immediate environment;
- 3) Behavior disruptive of the functioning of the patient care unit;
- 4) Reasonable limitations on the number of visitors at any one time; the number of visitors is generally limited to two (2) per patient. Children under the age of twelve may NOT visit
- 5) Patient’s risk of infection by the visitor; Visitors may not visit if they are exhibiting flu-like symptoms (fever, sore throat, cough, muscle aches).
- 6) Visitor’s risk of infection by the patient;
- 7) Extraordinary protections because of pandemic or infectious disease outbreak;
- 8) Substance abuse treatment protocols requiring restricted visitation;
- 9) Patient’s need for privacy or rest;
- 10) Need for privacy or rest by another patient in the patient’s shared room;
- 11) When patient is undergoing a clinical intervention or procedure and the treating health care provider believes it is in the patient’s best interest to limit visitation during the intervention or procedure.

**Patient** – anyone admitted to the Hospital as an inpatient.

**Support Person** – a family member, friend, or other individual who is at the Hospital to support the patient during the course of the patient’s stay and may exercise the patient’s visitation rights on patient’s behalf if patient is unable to do so. Such individual may, but need not be, the individual legally responsible for making medical decisions on the patient’s behalf.

**General Instructions to/expectations of visitors:**

All visitors must wash their hands before and after entering the patient’s room with either soap and water, or alcohol hand sanitizer.

Visitors must observe all infection control related information posted on signs on patient’s room door or in unit.

To prevent transmission of infection between hospital patients and visitors:

1. Universal precautions shall be maintained when in contact with blood or body fluids, as all patients are considered potentially infectious.
2. If a patient is on isolation or precautions, the instructions on the door must be followed. Appropriate personal protective equipment must be worn if there is a possibility of contact with blood or body fluids.

3. Visitors may not use a patient's bathroom, clothes closet or drinking glass.
4. Visitors who are feeling ill should not visit patients in the hospital.

To control the flow of visitors and employees within the Medical Center for safety, security and infection control purposes, persons entering Beth Israel Medical Center must, at all times, have in their possession an identification badge or been screened by Security at an entrance.

It is the responsibility of the Security Department to monitor visitor access at building entrances. If a patient's visitors have been restricted, Security will be informed and will be responsible for enforcing the restrictions.

It is the responsibility of the Manager and/or designees to monitor the number and appropriateness of visitors and to educate visitors regarding policies and required precautions. The Nursing or Medical staff may contact the Security Department for assistance should they determine that intervention is necessary.

Originating Department: Patient Care Services  
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