

## South Canterbury District Health Board (SCDHB) COVID-19 Visitor Policy

The South Canterbury District Health Board (SCDHB) COVID-19 Visitor Policy is one of the ways that the SCDHB is mitigating the risk of COVID-19 transmission to patients, staff and the wider community.

### Purpose

- To provide direction on access by members of the community who are visiting patients, or providing support to patients while in all SCDHB facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- To protect staff and patients during the COVID-19 pandemic
- To ensure a safe environment for patients, visitors and staff at all times
- To ensure enactment of health and disability commission Code of Rights; Right to support
- To enable access to whānau for patients in our care whilst balancing risk of COVID-19 that meets the needs of our patients while balancing safety and wellbeing risks of us all

### Scope

#### Inclusion

- This policy refers to all SCDHB facilities where patients are cared for
- Public visiting patients within inpatient units
- Public accompanying people to community clinics
- Public accompanying people to any outpatient or ambulatory area/clinic
- Public accompanying people presenting at the Emergency Department
- Public accompanying people requiring maternity services
- Non-essential visitors
- All patients' contractors and staff at SCDHB facilities where patients are cared for
- This policy is active for as long as an Epidemic Notice under the Epidemic Preparedness Act 2006 remains in force
- This policy references the Health and Safety at Work Act, 2015 by providing a framework to support the mitigation of risk to staff while visitors who meet criteria visit all work place facilities

#### Exclusion

Exclusions are limited:

- Exclusions will be considered on compassionate grounds for end of life, or therapeutic care, based on a risk assessment, and ability to mitigate risks at the time. Exclusions will be considered by the Charge Nurse/Midwife Manager (or senior delegate). In such case, staff facilitation of PPE processes must be adhered to, and minimisation of any risk of avoidable transmission. This will be managed on a case-by-case basis.
- Consideration to be given to those attending appointments for poor or pending prognosis e.g. cancer
- This policy excludes patients
- This policy excludes duty staff, volunteers and contracted workers performing or providing an essential service.

### Definitions

**Visitor:** Member of the public not receiving assessment, diagnostics or treatment

**Patient:** Member of the public receiving/seeking treatment, this includes mental health service users

**Non-essential visitors:** Company representatives, external people attending meetings, people not visiting patients/family/whānau, or people visiting the SCDHB facilities for a non-clinical reason

**Whānau spokesperson:** The single point of contact for the whānau

**High risk area:** Includes the COVID Ward, COVID Assessment Treatment Unit (CAT) Emergency Department (ED), Intensive Care Unit/High Dependency Unit (ICU/HDU), Monitored Care Unit (MCU), Aged Care ward, Mental Health Inpatient Unit, Maternity ward, Delivery Suite and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), Oncology (including chemotherapy areas), Renal Outpatient and Inpatient areas, Immunology, or other Outpatient areas who provide care to patients who have high vulnerability from potential exposure to COVID-19

## Staff Expectations

- Be aware of this policy and elicit outcomes across service
- Escalate visitor policy concerns to your line manager or Duty Nurse Manager (DNM)
- All staff will maintain respectful communication with families/whānau, treating each person with dignity and respect
- All staff will partner with families/whānau, carers and support people regarding this policy
- All staff will work with Māori and Pacific health teams to ensure cultural aspects of care are considered and actioned

## Visitor Expectations

- Respect staff requests to initiate and enforce the COVID-19 Visitors Policy
- Respect staff and patients by refraining from any disruptive offensive behaviour or verbal abuse
- Maintain infection control principles as instructed, inclusive of physical distancing requirements

## Guiding Principles

There is an expectation that:

- An emphasis is placed on whānau liaison throughout COVID-19 response
- Alternative means of communication between patients and whānau/families are encouraged and enabled
- DHBs will restrict the access points to one per facility, and ensure visibility of the expectations on visitors within the SCDHB facilities
- DHBs will ensure the visitor policy is not taken in isolation - it is part of a much wider risk assessment associated with the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the organisation and community
- The visitor policy (and future amendments) should take into consideration factors such as the National COVID-19 Hospital & Clinic Patient Visiting guidance, COVID-19 Protection Framework, community incidence, workforce levels or other significant incidents such as security threat which require restricted management of visitor access to facilities or a change in traffic light system

## Policy

The COVID-19 Protection Framework is determined by the Government. These measures are informed by scientific knowledge about COVID-19 and information about the effectiveness of control measures and system capacity to manage COVID-19.

SCDHB will ensure the visitor policy is part of a much wider risk assessment associated with the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the organisation and our community incidence, or workforce levels e.g. Vaccination/testing/staffing or managing community isolation requirements. To protect our vulnerable people by limiting the number of people coming into facilities the following actions occur:

- All visitors/patients/contractors will enter the facility through the identified facility **single point of entry** (or CAT entry for COVID suspected/probable/confirmed patients)
- Waiting rooms are to be marked with seats at least 2m apart and floor markings indicating a 2-metre boundary at reception/administration desks, with foot marks or equivalent for visitors to line up on if waiting, indicating appropriate physical distancing

**Visitors and Contractors Register:** All visitors and contractors will be required to scan in or sign in at the point of entrance to the facility and provide their contact details, the geographical area they are coming from and whether they have visited any areas of interest, or reside with any recently diagnosed whānau with COVID-19. If they are using the government's COVID-19 Tracer App, please ensure the Bluetooth tracing is turned on. This information will be used for the sole purpose of contact tracing should a patient, staff or visitor develop COVID-19.

- Evidence of COVID-19 vaccination is required for all **non-essential** visitors (as defined above), this may include presentation of your vaccination passport. Visitors supporting patients will **not** be expected to show a vaccination passport.
- All visitors will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to entry to reduce potential risk of transmitting COVID-19. **Visitors meeting the current COVID-19 case definition, or who have been at a location of interest, or with a household contact to current COVID-19 case must not visit.** Staff must ask them to leave the facility, and inform them to seek advice from Healthline or their general practice
- **Visitors in self isolation** (due to overseas travel; close contact; COVID-19 suspected or COVID-19 probable or positive): are not permitted to visit until their self-isolation period has concluded as advised by Community Public Health
- All visitors are required to comply with infection prevention and control requirements inclusive of:
  - hand hygiene prior and after visiting patients and hospital facilities
  - limit their movements within the facility to the service and/or person they are visiting.
  - wear a medical mask when accessing the healthcare facility
  - maintain physical distancing of 2 metres
- Patients' family/whānau carers and support person/people must designate a whānau spokesperson who will be the point of contact for the whānau regarding the visiting policy and any changes to it
- No pets unless deemed essential for the person – blind/deaf etc.
- Large family/whānau groups may only occur via telephone or Video Conferencing
- All patients encouraged to bring their own mobile phone, laptop, and given the details for access to WIFI
- ***Visiting may not be enabled if the infection control requirements are not able to be maintained within the service, for example physical distancing requirements.***

#### **Visiting a person suspected or confirmed positive of COVID-19:**

- Visiting patients who have been admitted with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 is only permitted at the discretion of the Charge Nurse/Midwife Manager or a senior clinician/manager designated within the DHB who is managing the patient. The reason for this is to ensure Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) processes are adhered to, and to minimise any risk of avoidable transmission.
- Other methods of communicating with a patient with COVID-19 should be facilitated as appropriate, such as Video Conference, Facetime, Zoom, Skype etc.
- A poster must be placed on the wall at entry points to instruct visitors to maintain good hygiene practices, including wearing masks, hand hygiene on entry and exit. The poster must explain the level of restriction at the time
- Before any visitor is allowed to enter an area where there are COVID-19 positive patients, they must be met by an appropriate staff member who will ensure personal hygiene requirements are met, and Personal Protection Equipment is appropriately worn and explanation of the policy.

**To protect our vulnerable people by limiting the number of people coming into facilities the following actions occur:**

- Maintain visitor hours strictly to 1400 – 2000hrs (unless prior arrangement made with the manager of the service)
- All visitors are to wear a medical mask, practice safe physical distancing and should remain 2 metres away from others as far as is practicable. In multibed rooms, this may mean the number of visitors is restricted due to the ability to maintain distancing

- Café open to staff and public at management discretion within government requirements. A vaccine pass will be required for visiting public
- Chapel and whānau rooms remain open with signage and information on distancing requirements
- To visit children, parents/caregivers can visit at any time, and at the same time
- A patient may have up to **two visitors per day** (except high risk areas, see below). They may visit at the same time (providing the service can maintain physical distancing requirements of 2 metres- unless from same household)
- Children younger than 12 years must not visit except by prior agreement with the line manager or equivalent

**Visitors to high-risk areas, ICU and MCU:**

- A maximum of ONE visitor at a time for ONE visit per day unless prior arrangements are made with the CNM/line manager

**Jean Todd Maternity Unit**

- A patient may have up to two visitors per day, they may visit at the same time. Each visitor may only visit once per day
- A support person may be present at any time during the inpatient stay and known as a boarder. Boarders must remain in the room and wear a medical mask, limit movement through the facility and comply with screening process

**Maternity Unit Birth Suite:**

- One birthing partner and one support person may accompany women in the Birthing Suite
- Partners (or nominated support person) are welcome to support the induction process in its entirety as a boarder. Boarders must remain in the room and wear a medical mask, limit movement through the facility and comply with screening process
- The Partner is considered part of the mother/pepi unit and entitled to be present as parent of the child once birthed

**All Outpatients Appointments (including Mental Health, Radiology and Medlab)**

- ONE support person if required
- Children who accompany a parent, caregiver or sibling to an outpatient appointment are permitted (with prior approval from the service) if there are no alternatives to childcare available

**Emergency Department**

- ONE support person ONLY to support people presenting to ED if required

**Oncology Medical Unit, Day Patient Services and Pre-Admission Clinic**

- ONE named support person per patient enabled where physical distancing can be maintained. The facility accommodates limited capacity – please advise at earliest convenience if you wish to have a support person with you during treatment to allow for planning safe distances

**Paediatrics**

- Parent/s or caregiver/s will be considered as ‘one with the admitted patient’

**Neo-Natal Unit**

- Parent visiting only

**References:**

Ministry of Health [MOH]. (November 29, 2021).

All District Health Boards; National Guidance: COVID-19 Hospital & Clinic Patient Visiting Guidance.