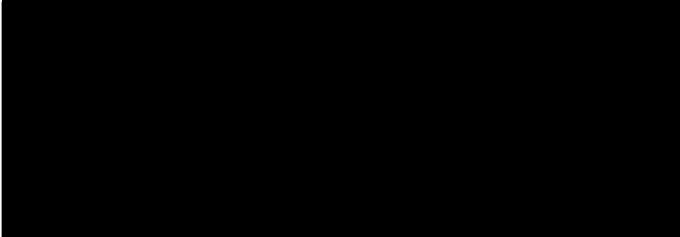


7 July 2020



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Re **Official Information Request – access for support people into public hospitals**

I refer to your official information request dated 23 June 2020 requesting the following additional information:

**I would like to do an OIA on the protocols the DHB had in relation to access for support people of patients in the public hospitals within your DHB region during Level 2 lockdown (between 14 May and 8 June) and Level 1.**

Auckland DHB enacted a visitor's policy in response to COVID-19 to support compliance with the government's national alert level restrictions and to reduce the risk of COVID-19 to our patients, staff and whānau. This policy covers people that may be accompanying a patient as a support person. Exceptions to the policy were able to be made, for example if somebody required a support person for a longer period.

In order to maintain physical distancing, reduce the number of people on our sites and continue to conduct health screening at our entrances during national alert level 2, we retained the policy that was in place during national alert level 3.

We lifted restrictions on visitors when the country moved to national alert level 1.

A copy of the policy that was in place during the dates requested is enclosed with this letter.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours sincerely,



Ailsa Claire, OBE  
Chief Executive





# COVID-19

## Patient Visitor Policy

### Purpose

These guidelines seek to manage the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within the hospital environment; while:

- supporting patients to remain connected with their whānau and loved ones; and
- facilitating whānau as partners in patient care.

### General Principles

This policy adopts a values-based approach that reflects Auckland DHB's core values of Haere Mai, Manaaki, Tūhono and Angamua. In particular, it:

- prioritises the safety of visitors, our patients and staff on site;
- recognises the importance of whānau as partners in patient care;
- protects the privacy and autonomy of patients and visitors;
- seeks solutions that keep patients connected with whānau; and
- strives to provide visitors with clear information and explanations that they can relate to their own circumstances.

### Visitor Restrictions

Special rules are in place for people wishing to visit Auckland DHB facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. These rules are consistent with Government measures that are in place to restrict contact between people and reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

They also reflect the vulnerable nature of many of the individuals who access our services and are at high risk of the impacts of COVID-19. They consider the well-being of individual patients alongside the wellbeing and safety of the Auckland DHB community and workforce as a whole.

We are continuing to monitor developments regarding COVID-19. Restrictions outlined in this policy will be regularly updated to reflect any changes in prevalence, risk and impact on hospital services.

## Visitors for Inpatients who are not COVID-19 Positive

From **Tuesday 28 April 2020**, inpatients at Auckland DHB facilities with no suspicion of COVID-19 positive, will be able to have one visit per day. Visits will usually be restricted to one visitor at a time. The visitor must be one of two people who have been identified as a patient's nominated visitors.

For maternity services, women in labour may have two support people with them and one of two designated visitors to stay overnight with the approval of the nurse in charge.

In the case of neonates, a mother and her baby are considered to be 'the patient' and an additional nominated visitor, is permitted at the same time.

## Compassionate Grounds

Exemptions may be made on compassionate grounds at the discretion of the nurse in charge or clinical nurse managers to enable:

- more than one visitor at a time
- more than two nominated visitors; or
- visits longer than 2 hours; and
- visits outside standard visiting hours; and
- visits by people under 14 years old.

In making exemptions on compassionate grounds, consideration will be given to factors including (but not limited to):

- Parents or guardians of a patient who is under 18 years of age
- Carers of a patient with a disability
- A partner or support person of a pregnant patient or a patient during a neonatal stay
- Whānau of long-stay inpatients
- Whānau of patients whose condition has worsened
- Whānau of patients at or near end of life
- Whānau who are unable to maintain contact using alternative modes, for example lack of access to technology.

If there is a disagreement between staff members, the case will be referred, for an immediate, third party decision, to:

- Nurse Director/Nurse Unit Manager (during working hours)
- Clinical Nurse Manager or Senior Manager On Call (after hours)

The decision regarding visitation on compassionate grounds will be communicated to both the patient and visitor by a senior staff member as soon as possible.

## Visitors for Patients with a COVID-19 Diagnosis

From **Tuesday 28 April 2020**, a nominated visitor may be permitted for inpatients with a **COVID-19 positive** diagnosis on compassionate grounds, at the discretion of the DHB. Prior to admitting

access, a risk assessment will be undertaken and the visitor will be informed of the risks of visitation.

Where access is permitted, the nominated visitor will be:

- supported in the donning and doffing and correct use of PPE;
- accompanied at all times by a nurse to validate the appropriate use of PPE and ensure the safety of the visitor;
- considered a casual contact following the visit; and
- agree that they do not visit other areas in hospital

The ward will advise ARPHS of the visitor's casual contact (including an email to ARPHS emergency operations team [arphsops@ahdb.govt.nz](mailto:arphsops@ahdb.govt.nz)) and advise the visitor that ARPHS will be in contact to follow up. Visitors will be followed up by ARPHS in a way that is consistent with the existing algorithm for the management of casual contacts. The DHB will advise ARPHS of any PPE breaches that impact on risk profile of the visitor.

### **Nominated Visitors**

A nominated visitor is a person who has been identified by a patient/parent/caregiver or guardian as their visitor. Nominated visitors usually need to be aged fourteen years or over.

There can only be two nominated visitor assigned to any inpatient at a given time. The two nominated visitors must be from the same extended 'bubble'. Only one of these nominated people can visit each day. Additional nominated visitors may be possible in those situations where compassionate grounds have been taken into consideration.

If appropriate, patients will nominate a visitor on admission or during their stay. If the patient is unable to nominate a visitor, appropriate parents, caregivers, or guardians will do so.

The name and contact details of nominated visitors will be recorded for individual inpatients. This information will be held centrally so that visitors can be checked at the entrance to ensure they are a nominated visitor. This will assist with the screening, monitoring and contact tracing of visitors into Auckland DHB facilities.

### **Support People for Outpatient Appointments**

Patients coming to an Auckland DHB facility for an outpatient appointment are able to bring a support person with them if required.

### **On-site Screening and Tracking of Visitors**

All nominated visitors to the hospital will undertake a health screening at point of entry, prior to being given access to the ward or service. A central register will be maintained at the entrance, documenting the visitor's name and phone number, the patient they are visiting, the ward visited

and the health screening outcome. This screening will be repeated every time a visitor presents at an Auckland DHB facility.

Health screening will be carried out by nursing or healthcare assistant staff located at entrances to facilities. If a visitor does not pass the health screening, the nurse will provide appropriate health advice and information and explain why they are not able to visit a patient.

Visitors who are given access to an Auckland DHB facility will be given a sticker with their name, the date and the time of entry. They will be required to display this sticker on their person throughout their visit.

### Visiting Hours

To enable the safe management of visitors onto Auckland DHB Inpatient facilities, visiting hours will be limited to 7.00 am to 8.00 pm.

### Communicating the Visitor Policy Onsite and Turning Away Visitors

Security guards and/or clinical staff will greet visitors and communicate the visitor policy. After a visitor has been screened, they will contact the relevant ward or service and confirm whether the visitor is the patient's nominated visitor. Visitors who are not confirmed by the wards will be provided with an explanation and advised steps they can take to become the designated visitor.

Visitors who are unable to see patients will also be offered the opportunity to leave a 'calling card' for their whānau. They will also be provided with information about alternative ways of 'staying in touch' with their loved one.

### Delivery of Food and Essential Items to Patient from Outside for Long Stay Patients (< 7 days)

We recognise that patients who are in hospital for extended periods of time, often require food and other amenities that are routinely provided by whānau and friends. These are an important way that whānau demonstrate their love and care for a patient and are considered an important part of patient wellbeing.

Whānau can deliver food and essential items for patients to security at the entrance to the facility. They need to provide items in a labelled bag that includes the patients name and ward. Paper bags are available at the entrances if required. Security will contact the ward area and a nurse or HCA from the ward will collect the goods.

### Precautions for Visitors to Observe

Whilst on site, visitors will be required to:

- ensure that they carry out appropriate hand hygiene measures;
- maintain a safe physical distance from staff and other patients; and
- display an entry sticker on their person at all times; and

- restrict their visit to the ward or service area that the patient they are visiting is located in or onsite retail areas for example cafes and the pharmacy.

#### Exceptions to this Policy

##### **Mental Health**

- Mental Health Inpatient areas will not accept any external food delivery
- Mental Health Inpatient areas will continue to closely monitor visiting in conjunction with this policy

##### **Cancer & Blood Directorate**

Restricted visiting will continue in our outpatient areas due to these being high risk service areas. This means:

- One nominated visitor for First Specialist Appointments (FSA) and clinic appointments for those patients with complex needs
- One nominated visitor for first Chemotherapy and Radiation Oncology treatments
- Patients to our outpatient area will continue to be screened on arrival.

Motutapu can accommodate one nominated visitor identified by a patient/parent/caregiver or guardian as their visitor.

Ward 64 is covered under the inpatient visitor policy.

Visitor Policy v2, 22 May 2020

**Document Owner:** Wendy Stanbrook-Mason

**Document Approved by:** Emma Maddren, ADHB IMT Incident Controller, 29 April 2020