

Supporting Family Presence Through the Elimination of Visiting Restrictions

Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region (RQHR) is removing visiting hour restrictions to support family presence in our facilities.

Research shows patients, residents and clients who are supported by family have better mental and emotional health, which helps them heal and manage their illnesses.

The Open Family Presence Policy is a provincial initiative that supports the creation of a patient- and family-centred culture in our facilities. All Saskatchewan health regions are implementing the policy. RQHR expects to have the policy in place in the next several months.

Open family presence means:

- Families are welcome 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- The desire of patients who wish to have family members present during a procedure will be respected.
- Family members' time with loved ones will not be restricted unless there's a valid clinical reason to do so.
- Late hour and overnight visits will be accommodated as long as the family member's presence is beneficial and not disruptive to other patients.
- Patients have the right to refuse a person's presence.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is considered family?

"Family" is defined as a group of individuals connected by kinship, affection, dependency and trust. The patient identifies who he or she considers to be a family member during the admission process. This can be modified at any time. Family is not necessarily a blood relative.

What if it feels as if there are too many family members in a shared room?

Discussions with the patient and family are necessary to determine the number of people welcome at the bedside. If the room is shared, discussions must include both patients. To ensure privacy and safety, consideration will also be given to the physical limitations of the space.

What do other organizations do?

Supporting around-the-clock family presence is considered best practice. Health care organizations around the world have adopted the policy. In Saskatchewan, Saskatoon and Sunrise health regions already have a policy in place.

What if the facility is experiencing an outbreak?

While limiting traffic helps control an outbreak, there are times when family must be present. The care team will ensure families receive instruction on hand hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment, such as masks and/or gowns.

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What if a family member has signs/symptoms of infection or illness?

We ask family to not come to a health facility if they have the following symptoms:

- Cough
- Cold
- Fever
- Flu-like symptoms
- Diarrhea
- Rash

In circumstances where family members with any of the above symptoms must be present, the care team will instruct family on hand hygiene and the appropriate use of personal protective equipment.

Who developed the policy?

It was developed by the provincial Patient and Family Centred Care Guiding Coalition, which has representation from patients and families, provincial health regions, provincial health agencies, the Saskatchewan Health Quality Council, and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health. The policy was based on policies in effect at Kingston General Hospital and Saskatoon and Sunrise health regions.

Who approved the policy?

Its adoption is supported by all provincial health authority CEOs and the deputy minister of Health.

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