

Dear Faith Community Leaders,

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we made the difficult decision to reduce visitation within our hospitals and clinics to help protect our patients and staff from the spread of the virus. We are now relaxing some of those restrictions, based on the prevalence of the disease in our communities and our improved supply of personal protective equipment. Decisions regarding visitors continue to be based on the safety of our patients and staff, along with our patients' emotional well-being. We continue to monitor and respond to the latest information from the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and working with our infection prevention and emergency preparedness experts.

### **Visitation in hospitals**

We have implemented new visitor hours in our inpatient units from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. In addition, each patient will be allowed one adult visitor (immediate family or significant other) at a time, including the emergency department. A patient's pastor, priest or religious leader are again able to visit a patient.

Additional visitors will be allowed in end-of-life situations and will generally be limited to immediate family/significant others. Visitation will be allowed past visitor hours. Patient's pastor, priest or religious leader can also visit a patient who is receiving end-of-life care. Adult COVID-19 patients will not be allowed to have visitors except in end-of-life situations. Decisions related to end of life visitation concerns will be made by unit leadership and patient's primary physician.

### **Important reminders for visitors:**

- Entrance into the building:
  - All visitors need to enter the building through the designated entrance and go through the screening process. A badge will be provided identifying visiting clergy that will be collected before leaving the building.
  - No one will be allowed to enter if they have any COVID-19 symptoms or have been exposed to the virus. All visitors are required to wear a mask while in our facilities, including while in the patient's room.
- While in the building:

Visitors are asked to go directly to the patient's room and to stay there. They are not allowed to eat or sleep in a patient's room.
- Hand hygiene:

Please wash your hands often. This is one of the best ways to avoid getting sick. It also helps to stop the spread of illnesses. Soap and water are best for killing viruses on your hands.
- Stand 6 feet away:

It is key to maintain social distance. Limit your contact with the patient and health care team by standing 6 feet away. Proper personal protective equipment should be worn, i.e. gloves, when performing spiritual rituals in proximity of the patient.

We're committed to safeguarding the health and wellness of our patients/residents and preventing the spread of illness. Communication is crucial in situations such as these, and we'll keep you updated as we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. You can find the latest information on the Essentia Health website at [www.EssentiaHealth.org](http://www.EssentiaHealth.org).

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