

Date:	May 1, 2020
To:	Northern Health Staff and Physicians
From:	Penny Anguish, NI COO, NH EOC Operational Lead Dr. Ronald Chapman, Vice President, Medicine
CC:	Angela De Smit, NE COO; Ciro Panessa, NW COO; Northern Health Medical Directors; Chief Medical Health Officer; NH EOC
Re:	COVID-19 Response - Essential Visitors Policy

As part of the ongoing COVID-19 response, visitors are restricted to essential visitors in all our facilities. This restriction behooves the clinical teams to develop clear communication plans with all those in our care to ensure families/significant others are able to remain connected to their loved ones. A comprehensive [essential visitor policy](#) has been developed to assist staff and physicians in the required decision-making to establish essential visitor routines in various care settings/situations.

The essential visitor policy was developed to balance the risk of infectious disease transmission and the promotion of person and family-centered care. This policy applies to all patients/residents, including those that are COVID-19 potential or positive.

In applying this policy, it is important to note:

- Visitor restrictions must be employed with compassion
- Adhering to protective personal equipment (PPE) requirements during essential visits is mandatory and the agreed upon visiting routine must minimize visitor use of PPE
- This policy supports the BC Ministry of Health requirements for preventing and controlling novel coronavirus
- All staff must abide by this policy to protect the patients, families, clinicians, health care workers and the public

An important first step in the application of this policy is determining if a visit is essential, essential visits being those in the following clinical situations:

- Visits for compassionate care (e.g. imminent end of life and during critical illness)
- Visits considered paramount to patient/resident care and well-being, such as providing medically necessary care and emotional support during times of crisis or other violent/traumatic events.

For more information on this policy and its application, please contact Debbie Strang, Assistant NI COO at Debbie.strang@northernhealth.ca