

# Involving Families During COVID-19

This is a challenging time as we adjust to a rapidly changing environment while doing our best to care for our patients, ourselves, and our families.



**Visiting hours have been restricted to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to keep patients, families, staff, and physicians safe.**

We've created this resource to share ideas of **how you can safely involve patients' families while adhering to current limits on visitation.**

## How can we facilitate family presence in the midst of a pandemic?

- Ask patients who their primary support person is.
- Invite patients to use phone calls and/or video calls to connect with their family.
- Facilitate family presence during rounds and bedside shift report at the patient's request using phone or video calls.
- Ask patients to designate a family member who can relay information about the patient to other family members. This can help reduce the number of people contacting the unit for information about the patient.

*Family Presence can decrease patient anxiety, reduce length of stay, improve patient outcomes, and provide essential history/context to inform care.*

Things regarding COVID-19 are changing rapidly and future public health recommendations may make some of this information no longer applicable. **To stay up-to-date on COVID-19 and limits on visitation,** please visit <https://insite.ahs.ca/covid>.

# Virtually Connecting with Families During COVID-19

**Technology** is extremely important during this time of temporary limits on visitation.



Using technology to involve families can **ensure patients are not socially isolated** and **maintain valuable partnerships with families**.

## Using Technology to Facilitate Family Presence

- Patients should be encouraged to use their own devices to virtually visit with their families via phone calls and video calls (e.g., FaceTime, Skype, Facebook Messenger).<sup>1</sup>
- Patients are permitted to record interactions with staff and physicians, for instance, so their family can be part of care conversations (e.g., rounds, bedside shift report).
- If patients do not have their own devices, sites/units can submit a request to their Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) to obtain iPads equipped with Zoom software. These devices are specifically designated for patients to use for virtual visitation.<sup>2</sup>
- Staff and physicians should not use their own personal devices or devices intended for clinical use to facilitate virtual visitation with families.

*If needed, assist patients in connecting their mobile device to AHS' free Wi-Fi 'healthspot'.  
(No user name or password is required.)*

If questions arise about patients' ability to use their own devices to record interactions with staff and physicians, please see the following AHS policy: [Mobile Wireless Devices and Services](https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/policydocuments/1/clp-cell-phones-other-mobile-devices-1160-policy.pdf) at <https://extranet.ahsnet.ca/teams/policydocuments/1/clp-cell-phones-other-mobile-devices-1160-policy.pdf>.

Have questions or looking for ideas about implementing these suggestions? Contact **Engagement and Patient Experience** at [Patient.Engagement@ahs.ca](mailto:Patient.Engagement@ahs.ca).