

COVID-19 Designated Support Persons

As a result of COVID-19, support to hospitalized patients from family or friends is considerably restricted at this time. Research has indicated that this has negatively impacted the mental and physical health of patients.

In order to address this impact, guidelines have been developed to provide a balanced approach for managing support to patients from family or friends in a way that minimizes risk. These guidelines respect the need and right for vulnerable patients to have support from others, as defined by them, to be involved in their care while recognizing the existing risks.

New Brunswick's Regional Health Authority's (RHAs) Designated Support Persons (DSPs) approach aligns with the guiding principles of the Canadian Foundation for Health Care Improvement (CFHI) and Canadian Patient Safety Institute's (CPSI) [Policy Guidance for the Reintegration of Caregivers as Essential Care Partners](#).

At the RHAs, family/friends who support patients will be defined as DSPs. This term emphasizes that they are respected as an essential member of the healthcare team and are "more than a social visitor". DSPs are active partners in care and can provide physical, psychological and emotional support. This care can include decision making support, care coordination and continuity of care. This term also aligns with the terminology and responsibilities of a DSP in New Brunswick's Nursing Homes.

DSPs will require infection and prevention and control education to keep the patient, members of the healthcare team and themselves safe. This will include hand hygiene, continuous mask use, and physical distancing when in contact with other patients/staff/visitors. As an active member of the healthcare team, the DSP is not required to maintain a 2M distance from the patient.

DSPs will not be limited to visiting hours applicable for general/social visits. The hours, frequency and support the DSP will provide to the patient will be determined in collaboration with the patient, the DSP and members of the care team.

Guiding Principles

Patient – The patient in this document is defined as an in-patient who is receiving services within hospital facilities and is not a suspect/confirmed COVID-19 patient.

Designated Support Person

- DSPs are not social visitors. A DSP is an active partner in care and an essential member of the healthcare team who can provide physical, psychological and emotional support, as deemed important by the patient. The DSP contributes to a positive patient experience and outcome.



- DSPs are individuals the patient wants involved in their care and can include family members, close friends or other caregivers. They are identified/designated by the patient or substitute decision maker (SDM).
- DSPs must be 18 years of age or older.

Social Visitors

- Social visitors have an important social role but do not participate as DSPs who are active partners in care.
- Social visitors are only permitted to visit during the Yellow Phase during specific visiting hours. If the DSP is with the patient, a social visitor is not permitted at the bedside at the same time.
- They are required to wear a mask, practice hand hygiene and **maintain a 2 M distance** from the patient and staff.

Eligibility: The following patient populations are eligible for a DSP:

- End of Life – Palliative Care (The patient will need to have a [Palliative Performance Scale \(PPS\)](#) value of 60% or less, the patient's time to death is within 3 months, based on a clinical prognostic, and the patient is not likely to be discharged home.)
- Obstetrics (Labour and Delivery, Postpartum)
- Neonatal
- Medically assisted death
- Intensive Care/Critical Care Units
- Pediatrics/Pediatric Psychiatry
- Patients who have been in hospital for 14 days or longer
- Patients with intellectual / communication impairments (Cognitive impairment leading to agitation and inability to console, Communication impairment which affects care)

Exceptions

Exceptions may include

- Life threatening diagnosis disclosure
- Before major surgery requiring critical care
- Care transitions where there is need for complex discharge planning/ preparation
- When the facility requests that someone be present for other reasons

Exceptions are to be addressed by:

- Healthcare leaders will bring forward the exception request to Executive Directors (Horizon) and appropriate VP for the sector concerned (Vitalité) for consideration. This will be completed in a timely manner. Ethics Services can be consulted if required.

Emergency/Outpatient/Ambulatory Care Services

- 1 DSP is permitted for adult patients who require assistance with decision making, communication, physical and emotional support.
- Children can be accompanied by 1 parent/guardian as a DSP.



- There may be circumstances where physical distancing with other patients within clinical areas will not allow for the DSP to be present. In this case, staff will communicate this to the patient and their DSP, and discuss options based on patient need.

Number of Designated DSPs

- Eligible patients or their SDM will designate DSPs (as per the [Visitation Table](#)).
- Patients may change their DSP(s) if the individual is unable to meet the expectations of the patient / unit.
- Each patient care unit will have a process to approve and document each eligible patient's DSP.

Infection Prevention and Control (IP&C)

- All DSPs will be required to meet and adhere to all COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control practices including active screening, Routine Practices that include hand hygiene, continuous mask use, physical distancing when in contact with other patients/staff/visitors, putting on and taking off personal protective equipment when required, following isolation precautions, and completing the Clean Hands Save Lives e-learning program.
- DSPs will be required to receive education and information on these IP&C practices and demonstrate compliance to mitigate the risk of the spread of infection.
- IP&C will determine the education required.

Visitation Details

- Visitation details will be defined by the healthcare team in collaboration with the patient and the DSP. This will include hours, frequency of visits and care that can be provided to the patient.

Restrictions

- DSPs will be required to adhere to Infection and Prevention Control practices and pass screening criteria before they can access a facility.
- DSPs will not be permitted to visit if the facility is experiencing an outbreak.
- RHAs may impose restrictions due to increased risk for patients and healthcare workers in the absence of a Provincial Alert Level change based on provincial, regional or local circumstances.
- In these circumstances, arrangements for virtual partnerships in care with the DSPs will be supported so they can actively participate with the care team. This participation may occur through virtual means such as phone, video conference or email and should be considered a short term or interim measure.

Conduct and Behaviour

- DSPs must follow hospital guidelines and be mindful and sensitive to the needs of others. This includes following IPC practices, the visitation plan, being respectful of all healthcare workers, and keeping noise and disruption to a minimum.
- Healthcare workers will address the non-compliance based on its severity and risk to others. This can include a discussion around the expectations up to and including removal from the facility, and removal of DSP designation.

PRESENCE OF DESIGNATED SUPPORT PERSONS (DSP)

Patient Group	Lock Down	Red Phase	Orange Phase	Yellow Phase
End of Life /Palliative Care	Up to 3 designated with 1 DSP at a time. When patients' PPS decreases to 20%, 2 DSPs can be present at a time and the 2 can be rotated.	Up to 10 designated with 1 DSP at a time. When patients' PPS decreases to 20%, 2 DSPs can be present at a time and the 2 can be rotated.	Up to 10 designated with 1 DSP at a time. When patients' PPS decreases to 20%, 2 DSPs can be present at a time and the 2 can be rotated.	Up to 10 designated with 1 DSP at a time. When patients' PPS decreases to 20%, 2 DSPs can be present at a time and the 2 can be rotated.
Medically assisted death	Up to 3 designated with 1 DSP at a time for the preprocedure phase. 2 DSP can be present during the procedure.	Up to 10 designated with 1 DSP at a time for the preprocedure phase. 2 DSP can be present during the procedure.	Up to 10 designated with 1 DSP at a time for the preprocedure phase. 2 DSP can be present during the procedure	Up to 10 designated with 1 DSP at a time for the preprocedure phase. 2 DSP can be present during the procedure
Critical Care (includes pts in critical care/state on other units (ex. post op, oncology,trauma)	1 DSP	Up to 2 DSPs, one present a time	Up to 2 DSPs, one present a time	Up to 2 DSPs, one present a time
Women in Labour	1 DSP	1 DSP	1 DSP	Up to 2 DSPs, 2 present at a time – if the 2 nd person is the Doula and if physical space permits
Postpartum	1 DSP	1 DSP	Up to 2 DSPs, one present a time	Up to 2 DSPs, one present a time
Neonatal	Up to 2 DSPs, 2 present at a time – when physical space permits	Up to 2 DSPs, 2 present at a time – when physical space permits	Up to 2 DSPs, 2 present at a time – when physical space permits	Up to 2 DSPs, 2 present at a time – when physical space permits
Pediatrics / pediatric psychiatry	Up to 2 DSPs, 1 present at a time	Up to 2 DSPs, 1 present at a time	Up to 2 DSPs, 1 present at a time	Up to 2 DSPs, 2 present at a time – when physical space permits
Other populations	Hospitalized Patients >= 14 days Not Permitted Exception: Patients with intellectual / communication impairments(1 DSP)	Hospitalized Patients >= 14 days Up to 2 DSPs, one present at a time	Hospitalized Patients >= 14 days Up to 2 DSPs, one present at a time	Hospitalized Patients >= 14 days Up to 2 DSPs, one present at a time
Outpatients – Emergency and Ambulatory Care	1 Support Person if patient is an adult and requires assistance 1 Support Person if patient is a child	1 Support Person if patient is an adult and requires assistance 1 Support Person if patient is a child	1 Support Person if patient is an adult and requires assistance 1 Support Person if patient is a child	1 Support Person if patient is an adult and requires assistance 1 Support Person if patient is a child

Patient Group	Lock Down	Red Phase	Orange Phase	Yellow Phase
General – social visitors	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	Not Permitted	Allowed during general visiting hours (2:00 – 8:00) 1 person permitted at a time (DSP or visitor)