



# Family Presence: Space

A key way to support family presence is to ensure designated family/support persons are invited to be present in the physical environment where care occurs. To the greatest extent possible, family/support persons should be provided with a comfortable option to be present and close to who they are supporting. In those situations where access to the patient may be limited, communicating limitations with patients and families should occur early, and alternatives to support family presence and visitation need to be explored.

## Tips for Success

- Ask the patient who they want to be directly involved in their care (designated family/support persons).
- Discuss with designated family/support persons how they would like to support patient and the best times to be present.
- To the greatest extent possible, ensure comfort for the designated family/support person, such as a chair or cot at bedside.
- Within AHS facilities, welcome family/support persons by orienting them to the space - providing information on washrooms, parking, food services, any unit requirements, etc.
- Ensure that family/support persons are aware that those staying with the patient must be able to care for their own needs.
- Inform patients and family they must respect the needs of the other patients and families regarding the use of space, including privacy, confidentiality, noise, and quiet times.
- Ask patients and family/support persons to orient their visitors to appropriate use of the space.



Can designated family/support persons stay overnight?

If the patient wants their family/support person to stay overnight, and they can be safely accommodated in the physical space, they are welcome to do so, in collaboration with the health care team.

Patients and families experience less agitation and remain calmer when they are able to be together, and staff receive fewer requests for status updates.

*“When people get sick and they are scared, they need comfort, and they don’t need comfort 9-5 - they need comfort 24/7.”*

– AHS Patient and Family Advisor

## What do I do when a patient has a large family or a lot of visitors?

- Early on, ask patient if they expect a large number of family/support persons and/or visitors.
- Collaborate with the patient to prioritize family/support persons interactions, and discuss preferred times for designated family/support persons to be present to provide support.
- Advise of any limits on the number of people that can be in a space at one time due to physical distancing requirements.
- Consider scheduling family/support persons and/or visitors to manage occupancy in smaller spaces.
- Encourage use of alternative spaces such as outdoor spaces, family lounges, and food courts when appropriate.
- Consider the number of family/support persons and visitors in decisions around room assignment (e.g. private versus shared room).
- Encourage designated family/support persons to communicate expectations with friends and family before they come to see the patient.

## What happens in over-capacity?

Over-capacity situations are stressful for everyone, including patients and family/support persons. During these times, patients often need their family/support persons as much as ever. Follow these tips:

- Offer what you can, such as a chair or options for other spaces - for example, family lounge, hallway area.
- Assure patients that their care is important and their family/support person is welcome.
- Decrease clutter by removing any unnecessary equipment. Clear rooms allow the most possible space for family/support persons to be present.

## Success stories

### Recognizing unique needs and abilities of the patient and family.

One resident at a continuing care facility in southern Alberta has been receiving care and support from his mother, ever since experiencing a brain injury several years ago. As he entered into facility living, the resident and his mother wanted to continue the connection and caring roles they have always had. The staff at this long term care facility have found ways to include his mother, now in her later years, as an active part of her son's care. They placed a cot at his bedside for her to use when staying the night, which she uses frequently.

### Where can I freshen up?

A big question for NICU parents at South Health Campus (SHC) was "Where can I freshen up". There aren't showers available on the unit, as not required for neonates. With parents already being discharged but an essential partner of newborn care, the NICU team collaborated with the SHC ICU team to arrange for NICU parents to use the dedicated family space in the ICU, allowing them to shower and meet their needs, without leaving the site.

### For information and support contact:

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### Did You Know?

AHS has a [Family Presence and Visitation Policy Suite](#) available on Insite