

TITLE: INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM POLICIES VISITATION RIGHTS IN FLORIDA	POLICY NUMBER: 5:91FL 1 of 4
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Policy

VITAS has flexible visiting hours for hospice patients as set forth in this policy and in accordance with Florida law and federal law.

Visiting Hours, Permitted length of visits and numbers of visitors

Hospice Patient in Residential Setting: For hospice patients that reside in a nursing home, VITAS contractually requires the nursing home to have flexible visiting hours for hospice patients. Florida law requires residential settings, such as a nursing home and assisted living facility (“Residential Settings”), to have visiting hours at a minimum between the hours of 9 a.m. and 9 p.m and for the reasons outlined in “Permitted Visitation” below. VITAS does not control the visitation policies in the Residential Settings. A hospice patient’s visitor must follow the Residential Setting’s visitation policies and procedures.

Hospice Patient in Non-Hospice Host Facility: For hospice patients receiving inpatient or respite services in non-hospice facilities, such as in a hospital or skilled nursing facility (Non-Hospice Host Facility), VITAS contractually requires those facilities to allow hospice patients to receive visitors at any hour, including infants and children, as required by the Medicare Conditions of Participation. Family members of the hospice patient are permitted to stay overnight in the Non-Hospice Host Facility. The number of visitors at one time will be based on fire safety risk and the ability of VITAS and Host Facility to provide services to all patients. **Visitors must follow all signage posted related to, but not limited to, infection control in the VITAS inpatient unit area as well as the Host Facility. See VITAS Management Standard (“VMS”) COVID for up to date postings.** A hospice patient’s essential caregiver, as defined below, can visit the hospice patient at any time. Consensual physical contact between the hospice patient and the visitor is permitted.

Hospice Patient in VIPU: Hospice patients receiving inpatient or respite services in a VITAS freestanding inpatient facility (“VIPU”) may receive visitors at any hour, including infants and children. VITAS will accommodate family members of the hospice patient that wish to stay overnight in the VIPU. VITAS will consider special circumstances such as, but not limited to, out-of-town visitors and working relatives or friends. The number of visitors at one time will be based on fire safety risk and the ability of VITAS to provide services to all patients. **Visitors must follow all signage posted related to but not limited to infection control signage in the VIPU. See VMS COVID for up to date postings.**

APPROVED BY:	TITLE: President & CEO	DATE ORIGINATED:	DATE OF LAST REVISION:
APPROVED BY:	TITLE: General Manager	DATE:	

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A hospice patient’s essential caregiver, as defined below, is allowed to visit a hospice patient at any time. VITAS will allow consensual physical contact between the hospice patient and the visitor.

Unless otherwise indicated in the hospice patient’s care plan, VITAS shall, with the consent of the hospice patient and in accordance with policies approved by the Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA), permit recognized volunteer groups, representatives of community-based legal, social, mental health, and leisure programs, and members of the clergy access to the VIPU for the purpose of visiting with and providing services to a hospice patient.

VITAS may require a visitor to agree in writing to follow VITAS’ policies and procedures. VITAS may suspend in-person visitation of a specific visitor if the visitor violates VITAS’ policies and procedures.

Permitted Visitation

In-person visitation is permitted in all of the following circumstances, unless the hospice patient objects:

- End-of-life situations
- A patient who was living with family before being admitted to VITAS and is struggling with the change in environment and lack of in-person family support
- The patient is making one or more major medical decision
- A patient is experiencing emotional distress or grieving the loss of a friend or family member who recently died
- A patient needs cueing or encouragement to eat or drink which was previously provided by a family member or caregiver
- A patient who used to talk and interact with others is seldom speaking
- Pediatric patients

Essential Caregiver designation

A hospice patient may designate a visitor who is a family member, friend, guardian, or other individual as an essential caregiver that can visit patients receiving inpatient care in the Non-Hospice Host Facility and the VIPU for at least 2 hours daily in addition to any other authorized visitation.

The essential caregiver is not required and will not be required to provide necessary care to the patient.

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Infection control and education for visitors

Hospice Patient in Residential Setting: For hospice patients residing in a Residential Setting, VITAS does not control the Residential Setting’s infection control and education policies for visitors. A hospice patient’s visitor must follow the Residential Setting’s infection control and education policies and procedures when visiting the hospice patient.

Visitor Screening

Hospice Patient in Non-Hospice Host Facility:

Visitors will be screened based on current infection control guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). VITAS’ screening procedures will be posted at the VITAS inpatient unit area in the Host Facility. In addition, the visitor will be required to follow the Host Facility’s screening guidelines prior to entering the Host Facility. The visitor screening process shall not be more stringent than the employee screening process and shall not require proof of vaccination.

Hospice Patient in VIPU:

Visitors will be screened based on current infection control guidelines from the CDC. VITAS’ screening procedures will be posted at the VIPU. The visitor screening process shall not be more stringent than the employee screening process and shall not require proof of vaccination.

Personal protective equipment for visitors

Hospice Patient in Non-Hospice Host Facility:

Visitors will be required to follow the Non-Hospice Host Facility’s requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE) in order to enter the facility. In addition, the visitor may be required to follow VITAS’ PPE requirements prior to entering into the VITAS inpatient unit area in the facility. VITAS’ requirements for PPE for visitors will be based on current CDC guidelines. The guidance on general PPE requirements will be posted near the entrance to the VITAS inpatient unit area in the facility. If PPE, such as wearing a cloth facemask is required by the CDC, the visitor may be required to provide their own face mask. If the visitor does not have a facemask, one will be provided, if supplies permit.

If a patient is placed on isolation precautions, visitors shall follow the directions posted near the entrance to the patient room. Any required PPE for isolation will be provided by VITAS.

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Hospice Patient in VIPU:
 VITAS’ requirements for PPE for visitors in the VIPU will be based on current CDC guidelines. The guidance on general PPE requirements will be posted in the VIPU entrance. If PPE, such as wearing a cloth facemask is required by the CDC, the visitor may be required to provide their own face mask. If the visitor does not have a facemask, one will be provided, if supplies permit.

If a patient is placed on isolation precautions, visitors shall follow the directions posted near the entrance to the patient room. Any required PPE for isolation will be provided by VITAS.

Other infection control protocols for visitors

Hospice Patient in Non-Hospice Host Facility:
 Visitors will be required to follow the Non-Hospice Host Facility’s infection control protocols in order to enter the facility.

Hospice Patient in VIPU:
 Visitors will be required to follow VITAS’ posted infection control protocols.

Designation of a person responsible for ensuring that staff adhere to this policy

The VITAS clinical manager is responsible for ensuring that staff adhere to this policy.

Access to policies and procedures

VITAS shall provide its visitation and infection control policies and procedures to AHCA when applying for initial licensure, licensure renewal, or change of ownership. VITAS shall make these policies and procedures available to AHCA for review at any time, upon request.

VITAS shall make the visitation policies and procedures easily accessible from the website homepage.

Reference:

Florida Statute Section 408.823
 VITAS Management Standards related to COVID 19, infection control, and visitation.

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