



We have the legal right of way.

FACT SHEET: Hospital Visitor Policies and Your Right to Reasonable Accommodation

Because of COVID-19, hospitals made rules about patients having visitors. Many hospitals now have rules about who can visit a patient, how many people can visit a patient, how often a person can visit, and how long a visitor can stay. Hospitals may even say that no one can visit or stay with a patient.

If you have a disability, the law requires that hospitals make reasonable accommodations to their visitor policies for you. This means they will have to make exceptions to their rules if you need support from a service provider, a family member, or other caregiver. For example, you may need help with:

- Communicating your medical needs
- Making important medical decisions
- Activities of daily living
- Moving around
- Behavioral support needs
- Emotional support needs
- Managing anxiety
- Other unique needs

Who can be my support person?

Your support person can be anyone you want to help you make sure you get the care and treatment you need, just as anyone else does. For example, your support person could be:

- A family member;
- A caregiver;
- An advocate;
- A services provider; or
- Anyone else you rely on for help because of your disability.

What if I need multiple support people or 24/7 support?

Hospitals should consider your unique needs when allowing you to have support persons help you during your visit.

When can my support person be with me?

Hospitals should allow your support person to help you from when you arrive at the hospital until after you are discharged.

Will my support person have to bring their own personal protective equipment (PPE)?

Hospitals should provide your support person with available PPE. Your support



person should be prepared to bring their own PPE, just in case.

Does my support person count as a “visitor”?

A support person is different from a visitor. Hospitals can't prevent you from having a visitor just because you rely on a support person. For example, if a policy lets each patient have one visitor, your support person shouldn't count as that one person.

If my support person leaves the hospital, can they come back the same day?

A hospital should allow your support person to take breaks outside the hospital and come back in when ready, even if the hospital's visitor policy would not otherwise allow re-entry.

When should I tell the hospital that I need a support person?

If possible, tell the hospital before you get there that you need a reasonable accommodation to its visitor policies—that is, you need to have one or more support persons with you during your visit.

Are there limits to my right to have a support person present?

Hospitals don't have to let you have a support person if they can show that doing so would:

- Change the nature of the hospital's program,
- Cost too much money for the hospital or be too much of a burden, or
- Pose a direct threat.

For example, a hospital might not let your support person come with you if that person has COVID-19 symptoms.

A hospital might not allow your support person to come into the hospital if they don't follow the hospital's reasonable policies. For example, if the hospital requires temperature checks and your support person refuses (or has too high a temperature), then the hospital may be able to keep your support person from entering. If that happens, the hospital should allow you to have a different support person come with you.

If a hospital won't let you have a support person come with you, or if you have questions about your rights, you should **call Disability Rights Ohio's Intake Line at 614-466-7264 or 1-800-282-9181**, press option 2, and leave a message. We will return your call.