
YOUR RIGHT TO HAVE A SUPPORT PERSON WHILE HOSPITALIZED DURING THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY

Can a hospital stop me from having a visitor during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Maybe. The New York State Department of Health has stopped visitors to hospitals to protect patients and people who work at the hospital. But, “Patient Support Persons” are allowed into hospitals to visit some patients.

I am a person with a disability, can I have a “Patient Support Person” at my bedside?

A hospital must let you have a Patient Support Person if you are a person with:

- an intellectual disability
- a developmental disability, or
- a cognitive impairment such as dementia

Your Support Person must be someone who is essential (very important) to you getting hospital care.

Your hospital will have rules to decide if a Patient Support Person is “essential” to you.

What does a “Patient Support Person” do?

A Patient Support Person helps you while you are in the hospital so that you can get the medical care you need. A Patient Support Person can stay with you while you are at the hospital.

Can I pick my Support Person?

Yes. You can choose two (2) Support Persons, but can only have one Support Person with you at a time. You can choose a family member, a caregiver, or someone else to

CONTACT US

Voice: 518-432-7861

TTY: 518-512-3448

Toll Free: 1-800-993-8982



ALBANY

725 Broadway, Suite 450
Albany, NY 12207-5001

BROOKLYN

25 Chapel St, Suite 1005
Brooklyn, NY 11201

ROCHESTER

44 Exchange Blvd, Suite 110
Rochester, NY 14614

be your Patient Support Person. It is best to choose a Support Person who is healthy and under the age of 70.

What happens when I tell the Hospital I want a Patient Support Person?

Hospital staff should tell you about any Patient Support Person rules when you get to the hospital, or before you arrive. The Hospital must tell you about these rules in a way that you understand:

- The hospital must talk with you and your support person about the advantages and disadvantages of having a Patient Support Person at your bedside while you are in the hospital.
- If you are 18 or older, the hospital should have this talk with you when you arrive at the hospital, or before you arrive at the hospital.

The hospital may limit the time your Support Person can spend with you, even if they are “essential” or very important to you.

Who can be a Patient Support Person?

Your Support Person needs to meet safety rules before they can go into the hospital with you.

- A Patient Support Person will be asked questions to make sure they are not sick and do not have a temperature, cough, shortness of breath, and sore throat.
- A Patient Support Person will be asked if they have had contact with someone who has COVID-19 or have traveled internationally in the past 14 days.
- If the Patient Support Person is sick, they may not be let into the hospital with you. You will need to choose another Support Person.
- The Patient Support Person will be checked many times to make sure they do not have COVID-19. If they become sick and show signs of COVID-19, they will need to leave the hospital. You will be able to choose a different Support Person.

Can I help the hospital decide whether I need a Patient Support Person?

Yes. If you think you will need a Support Person when you go to the hospital you can collect information now that will help you.

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- Bring papers that show the hospital staff that you have an intellectual disability, developmental disability or cognitive impairment. This might be an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a Life Plan, and Individual Service Plan (ISP), a medical or psychological report, or other records.
- Bring papers that have the full name, address, and phone number of each Support Person. Tell the hospital if the person is a family member, caregiver, staff, or friend.

Many hospitals want this information *before* you go to the hospital. If you can, you or your Support Person should contact the hospital before you go.

Can I talk with my family or caregiver when I'm in the hospital even if they cannot be a Support Person?

Yes. If the hospital decides you do not need a Patient Support Person with you in the hospital, the hospital should still let you talk on the phone or FaceTime your family or caregiver.

Are there other people who may get a Patient Support Person?

Yes. Other people in the hospital may also be able to have a support person:

- Children
- People who are having a baby
- People who are very close to dying

DRNY is here to help. Contact us if you:

- Have questions about your rights during the COVID-19 emergency.
- Believe you're experiencing disability-related discrimination due to COVID-19.
- Are having difficulty receiving accessible information about COVID-19.

Depending on the facts of your situation, Disability Rights New York may be able to assist you with your issue. Please call Toll Free: 1-800-993-8982, Voice: 518-432-7861, or TTY: 518-512-3448 if you think you need our assistance.

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