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## Visitor Procedure

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Effective: 22 December 2016

### 1. Guiding Principles

Families and friends make essential contributions to the mental health of patients during inpatient treatment and patients have a right to have access to friends and family while admitted to the Acute Psychiatric Unit (APU).

The APU staff are to facilitate and support patient access to people who will assist them in their recovery.

APU staff are to assess whether or not the visitor(s) pose a risk to the patient they are visiting or another patient, and to take action required to maintain the safety of the APU at all times.

### 2. Procedure

All visitors are to:

- be asked to report to the nurses' station to sign in as a visitor
- be orientated to the APU and advised which areas are freely accessible to visitors
- be provided with an APU handbook
- prior to leaving, be asked to sign out
- respect visiting times and the need to depart the APU by 2000 hrs.

Visiting hours are between 10:00am to 8:00pm for the non-secure unit. Visitors to patients in the secure unit are asked to phone in advance to book a time to visit.

Visitors are not permitted access to the patient's bedrooms without staff supervision. In individual cases where it is part of the patient's treatment to have identified visitors remain in the bedroom unsupervised by staff, this is to be recorded in the patient care plan and approved in writing by the treating Consultant Psychiatrist.

Visitors are not permitted to smoke in the courtyard but must exit the APU and the Albany Hospital to smoke off the hospital grounds as required under the [Smoke Free WA Health System Policy](#).

Visitors under the age of 18 may be permitted access to the APU only at staff discretion. If the visit is assessed as posing a risk to the child visitor, the patient and their visitor are to be provided with access to the secure family room to facilitate visits. In some circumstances, this may require the attendance or monitoring by a staff member for the duration of a visit.

If a visitor has brought in supplies for the patient (e.g. medication, clothes) a nurse is to watch as the visitor provides this to the patient in order to identify any items not permitted on the APU for safety reasons. Any items not permitted may be secured in the patient's locker or returned to the visitor to take home.

If a patient has indicated that they do not want a particular visitor, this information is to be added as an alert on the patient journey board and an email sent to the APU receptionist to alert them to the restriction. If a restricted visitor does arrive, they are to be advised that the patient does not want to see them at this time and asked to leave the unit.

Visitors intoxicated or under the influence of illicit substances are not to be allowed entry to the APU and are to be asked to leave. If they refuse to leave, the nursing staff are to seek the assistance of security or the orderlies in removing the visitor from the unit. If the visitor still refuses to leave, the police are to be called by security or orderlies. In this instance, it may be necessary to lock down access to the unit until the situation is deemed safe.

In consultation with the psychiatrist, staff may restrict visitors if it is determined to be in the patient's best interests. In the event this does occur, it is to be documented in the progress notes and patient's care plan.

### 3. Definitions

<b>Visitors Book</b>	Hard copy record of visitor activity requiring sign-in on arrival and sign-out on departure for the safe management of all visitors on the APU
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### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

**APU Nurse Unit Manager** is responsible for monitoring the use of the visitors book to ensure that all visitors are recorded.

**APU staff** are responsible for ensuring that visitors sign in and out using the visitors book to ensure that all visitors are recorded, and for the monitoring/supervising of the above requirements relating to visitors.

### 5. Compliance

It is a requirement of the WA Health [Code of Conduct](#) that employees "comply with all applicable WA Health policy frameworks."

A breach of the Code may result in Improvement Action or Disciplinary Action in accordance with the WA Health [Discipline Policy](#) or Breach of Discipline under Part 5 of the *Public Sector Management Act*.

WACHS staff are reminded that compliance with all policies is mandatory.

### 6. Evaluation

Monitoring of compliance with this document is to be regularly carried out by APU Nurse Unit Manager, using the following means / tools:

- Random audits of the use of the Visitor's book and any incidents relating to visitors to the APU.

## 7. Standards

[National Safety and Quality Health Care Standards](#) 2.4.1, 2.4.2  
[EQulPNational Standards](#) 11.1.1,  
[National Standards for Mental Health Services](#) 6.3, 6.5, 6.11, 6.16, 7.2, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 10.1.1, 10.1.7, 10.5.5

## 8. Legislation

[Mental Health Act 2014](#)

## 9. Related Policy Documents

WACHS [Access Control Procedure](#)

## 10. Related WA Health Policies

[Smoke Free WA Health System Policy](#)

## 11. WA Health Policy Framework

[Mental Health Policy Framework](#)  
[Public Health Policy Framework](#)

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