


LD-21 ELMHS Visitation Policy

	Eastern Louisiana Mental Health System (ELMHS)	
	Content	Visitation Guidelines
	Effective Date	01/20/2023
	Policy Owner	Brandi Castiglione, Assistant CEO Brandi.Castiglione@la.gov

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. ASSA - Admissions Special Security Area
- B. Attestation - form completed by adult visitor attesting to the guardianship of a minor visitor.
- C. CV - Cedarview
- D. Clients - people currently being treated at ELMHS
- E. CGT - Correctional Guard Therapeutic
- F. CRU - Crossroads Rehabilitation Unit
- G. ELMHS - Eastern Louisiana Mental Health System
- H. ELMHS Visitor Pass #001 - form completed by visitor and hospital staff regarding client being visited.
- I. EH - Evangeline House
- J. Front gate - the main entrance gate into Eastern Louisiana Mental Health System.
- K. Immediate family - clients parents, children, siblings and grandparents.
- L. ITU – Intermediate Treatment Unit
- M. Medical Record Number- a numeric code assigned to clients upon admission and provided to client’s family by the client and/or direct care staff to facilitate communication and visitation during the client ' s stay at ELMHS.
- N. OC-Oakcrest Unit
- O. PA - Psychiatric Aide

- P. Sally Port - the security building at the entrance of the locked, secured client buildings (buildings enclosed by a security fence).
- Q. Treatment Team - consists of the client's psychiatrist, social worker, nurse and Recreational therapist.

II. PURPOSE

The nature of Eastern Louisiana Mental Health System dictates that ELMHS takes every precaution in assuring that the safety of the clients, staff and public are protected. The visitation policy is an effort on the part of ELMHS to ensure that client rights are protected and carried out without jeopardizing the safety and security of the clients, staff and public.

III. SCOPE

The scope of this policy is applicable to all inpatient divisions of ELMHS, including the Intermediate Care Facility for people with Developmental Disabilities (ICF/DD) Community Group Home program. All staff are responsible for complying with enforcing this policy and procedure.

IV. POLICY

All clients' families, friends, clergy, and attorneys are allowed to visit clients as outlined in Act 714 of the 1977 Louisiana Legislature amending Title 28 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1972 (Revised Statues 28: 171,1996) as well as ACT 367 effective August 1, 2023 in accordance with R.S. 40:2005 which states that any person eighteen years or older may designate those individuals who will not be denied access to visit in-person during any stay in any hospital, nursing home, or other healthcare facility within the State of Louisiana, with restrictions as set forth by the Administration of Eastern Louisiana Mental Health System and by mental health standards. In accordance with R.S.40:2180.2, licenses intermediate care facilities for people with developmental disabilities (ICF/DD) may allow any close family member or legal representative of a resident of an ICF/DD to visit the resident during any state of public health emergency. The client in a treatment facility shall be permitted unimpeded, private and uncensored communications by visitation, including nonsexual physical contact such as hand holding or hugging where appropriate. These rights may be restricted if such visits are clinically contra-indicated, by the Director of the treatment facility and sufficient cause exists and is documented in the client's medical records.

Visitation Times

Specific unit hours for visitation are as follows:

** If a client is on medical pass at another hospital, or Villa Sickbay, visitation shall follow that facility's policy.

ASSA, CRU, ITU	Monday - Friday Weekends and Holidays	1:00 PM - 4:00 PM 10:00 AM-3:30 PM
Oakcrest	Monday - Friday Weekends and Holidays	2:00 PM - 4:00 PM 10:00 AM-3:30 PM
Evangeline	Monday - Friday Weekends and Holidays	1:00 PM- 3:30 PM 10:00 AM-3:30 PM
DD, CV	Monday - Friday Weekends and Holidays	8:00 AM-4:00 PM 10:00 AM- 3:30 PM
Villa Sickbay	Monday - Friday Weekends and Holidays	1:00 PM-3:30 PM 10:00 AM-3:30 PM

Exceptions to the above visiting hours include:

Attorneys: Clients shall have the right to communicate with his/her attorney, in private, at all times. Attorneys will be allowed to visit at any time. Upon arrival at the front and/or building security gate attorneys providing legal advice or representing clients who have been admitted to ELMHS must provide the following:

- a) Current and valid picture Identification.
- b) Bar Association card or Documentation of current membership in good standing with a state bar association.

In the event that bar association status documentation is not available on the initial visit:

- c) Current Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) status shall be confirmed using the Louisiana State Bar Association Membership Directory via the LSBA website at:
<https://www.lsba.org/MD321654/MembershipDirectory.aspx>

In the event that current membership in a state bar association is not in good standing, or cannot be verified, standard family and friends visitation policies will apply and entry may be denied until a later date.

Clergy: outside clergy will be allowed to visit under the guidelines of adult visitors. Clergy visits shall be at the request or approval of the client. Clergy wishing to conduct services at the facility must obtain approval through the Rehabilitation Department's Pastoral Services. In accordance with R.S.40:2005 hospitals, nursing homes, and adult residential care homes may allow members of the clergy to visit patients or residents during a public health emergency whenever a patient or resident requests the visit. Special consideration shall be given to patients or residents receiving end-of-life care.

Regulatory Survey Staff: Clients shall have the right to communicate with regulatory survey staff, in private if requested by the client and/or regulatory survey staff, in accordance with established safety protocols.

By Attending Physician Order: in rare instances, clients may receive visitors outside of the normal visiting hours if prior approval is received from the clients attending Physician.

Civil Division RN Manager/Supervisor B: in rare instances, may allow for visiting outside established visiting hours. For example - unforeseen circumstances that prevent a visitor, who has traveled a great distance, from arriving within established visiting hours.

Forensic Division RN Manager/Supervisor B: in rare instances, may allow for visiting outside established visiting hours. For example - unforeseen circumstances that prevent a visitor, who has traveled a great distance, from arriving within established visiting hours.

B. Visitor Guidelines:

1. **Adults:** a client is allowed visits from family and friends during regular visitation hours, unless otherwise indicated by the Treatment Team or the client. For reasons that may damage the integrity of the therapeutically secure and safe environment of clients, some restrictions may be placed on who may visit the client. These restrictions may occur with the recommendation of the client's treatment team and with approval of the Chief Executive Officer, if sufficient cause exists, and is documented in the client's medical record.

2. **Children:** children under the age of 17, other than the clients' immediate family (children, grandchildren or siblings), are not allowed to visit, save for very rare instances. Those children who are not immediate family must be granted special, written permission by the Chief Executive Officer and/or Clinical Director of ELMHS. Visitors under the age of 17 must be accompanied by, and under the supervision of, the legal parent and/or guardian. The adult will complete an attestation (see Appendix B) confirming he/she is the minor 's legal parent and/or guardian. Clients with a history of inappropriate sexual behavior with minors under the age of 17 will not be allowed to receive visitors under the age of 17.

****It is the responsibility of the RN on the unit to determine if the client can receive visitors under the age of 17, based on a history of inappropriate behaviors with minors.**

3. **News Media:** in the event a client requests a visit from a journalist, in their professional capacity, approval must be granted by the Chief Executive Officer. If the CEO cannot be reached, the media member will be referred to LDH Public Relations Office. ***No information is to be released from this facility.***

4. **Visitor Limitations:** Visitors to ELMHS are required to be appropriately dressed. Visitors will not be permitted to visit while wearing halter tops, exposed bare midriff, short (mid-thigh or above), tight/revealing bottoms or dresses. Shoes must be worn at all times.

Three (3) visitors per client will be allowed at one time.

Visiting is limited to a period of three (3) hours. Exceptions to the time limit may be made by the attending Physician or RN Manager/Supervisor B.

Visitors shall not be allowed to use facility telephones for non-emergency telephone calls, and are asked to make all calls before entering ELMHS campus.

If an emergency telephone call must be made from an ELMHS telephone, staff members shall be present during the call.

Visitors who behave in a threatening, intoxicated, reckless or dangerous manner will be asked to leave/removed by Security.

No pets are allowed on campus.

Only prepackaged, factory sealed articles of food and drink are to be brought to ELMHS. Home prepared food and drink are not allowed for security purposes, as well as per LDH Health Standards Section. Any packages brought to ELMHS are subject to inspection by the staff in the presence of the client.

Cash is considered contraband on all units, except for Cedarview and Dorothea Dix. On those units, clients are allowed to possess up to \$10.00 cash. Therefore, visitors shall give any cash, check or money order intended for a client not housed on Cedarview or Dorothea Dix to Security staff at the gate, who will then provide a receipt for monies that will be deposited in the clients account. For clients housed on Cedarview or Dorothea Dix, checks, money orders and cash sums greater than \$10.00 will be given to Nurse/Psych Aid who will then provide a receipt for monies that will be deposited in the clients account.

Epidemiology Guidelines established by the Association for Professionals in Infection Control pertaining to nosocomial infections restrict visitation of persons with respiratory diseases or any sign of communicable infections, **these persons shall not be permitted to visit hospital clients.**

5. **Contraband:** Before entering visiting areas, visitors must present all items to be inspected by staff. All visitors, including children under the age of 17, are subject to searches, including the use of metal detectors/ hand-held wands, and body searches. Though not all inclusive, the following items are considered contraband and shall not be allowed in visiting areas:

- Glass bottles and containers
- Metal knives, forks and spoons and containers
- Drugs, alcohol and medications
- Tea bags
- Cigarettes, cigarette lighters and matches
- Cameras
- Weapons of any kind, including mace and pepper spray

Weapons refer to any firearm, knife or device that could cause bodily harm. Weapons are never permitted on the hospital grounds. All visitors and law enforcement officials shall relinquish weapons and ammunition to front gate personnel for proper storage before entering the facility. Local law enforcement is permitted to carry weapons on grounds during the performance of official duty; however, weapons are never permitted on client care buildings.

Other items that are considered contraband by hospital staff will not be allowed inside the visitors' area. Contraband is any item that can be

considered dangerous, injurious or viewed as a threat to the integrity or security of ELMHS.

If there is any uncertainty about an item, the visitor shall check with the security officer at the entrance gate to the unit (ASSA, ITU, CRU, OC, EH) or with the nurse supervisor upon entering Cedarview or Dorothea Dix. Anything found on a visitor that is considered contraband shall be confiscated and returned at the time of departure.

V. PROCEDURE

Any vehicle that is not identified as an ELMHS vehicle will be required to stop at the front gate and be processed as a visiting vehicle. A valid driver's license or state identification card will be required of all adult visitors. Visitors will be identified by a visitors' badge, which will be received upon entering the front gate, worn in plain view at all times during the visit and returned to the front gate security officer when exiting the hospital grounds.

A vehicle identification pass will be given to all visitors to place in their vehicles. The vehicle identification pass must be clearly displayed on the vehicle's dashboard at all times.

Client's visitors will have the client's medical record number of who they are there to see. Clients and their social workers shall ensure that all expected visitors will be provided with this number prior to visitation. The officer assigned to the front gate shall be responsible for proper identification of all visitors entering or leaving the facility. In the event that a visitor doesn't have the client's medical record number, the officer will not verify the client's presence in the facility to the visitor. The officer will phone the client's unit, obtained from the census, and attempt to determine if the client would like to see the visitor.

Staff bringing visitors in with them in a vehicle, or escorting them on foot, are responsible for notifying gate security and acquiring a visitors badge for the visitors.

If in doubt about the identity of a visitor, the officer shall not allow the person on hospital grounds until identification has been verified.

The front gate officer will initiate an ELMHS Visitor Pass #001 noting the following information: date, arrival time, and purpose of entry. Visitors will be required to fill the section of the form regarding signature, address, driver's license, race, sex, name and ages of children visiting. Visitors who are unable to complete this task will be afforded assistance by the officer as necessary. The gate officer shall also inform the visitor of the requirement to keep the pass slip and ID badge at all times and to return these items to the gate officer when leaving the grounds after completion of the visit.

After the visitor completes ELMHS Visitor Pass #001, the front gate officer will verify the visitor's destination. The officer will phone the unit Nurse to notify them of an approaching visitor.

Upon receiving a call and confirming the client's willingness to visit, the nurse is to inform the front gate officer as to whether the client can receive visitors under the age of 17.

The RN Manager is responsible for identifying and maintaining a list of all clients with a history of inappropriate sexual behavior with children under the age of 17. The list shall be updated weekly, and upon receipt of a new client, and kept in the nursing station of each building.

Front gate officers will maintain a log recording visitor name, time of entry, destination, and name of building staff notified. The visitor will go directly to the building of destination and have building staff complete their section of ELMHS Visitor Pass #001 upon arrival and departure. When visitors exit the front gate, the front gate staff will secure the ID badges, vehicle ID pass, and ELMHS Visitor Pass #001. The front gate officer will complete the form and the log. All completed forms will be forwarded to the Assistant Director of nursing for review and further reference purposes.

The front gate officer will verbalize to all visitors their responsibilities regarding **Louisiana Law Revised Statute 14:402.1 Taking of Contraband to State Owned Hospitals Unlawful;**

Penalty: Parts A and B captioned on ELMHS Visitor Pass #001 prior to entry onto the grounds.

All visitors are subject to be searched at any time. Visitors who refuse to consent to search prior to and after entry shall be denied visiting and instructed to leave the hospital grounds immediately. See contraband policy

For visitation with clients on Cedarview or Dorothea Dix, visitors will be required to check in with unit staff who will check all articles which are to be taken in during the visit. For visitation with clients on all other units, visitors will be required to check in with the security officer at the Sally P011 who will check all articles which are to be taken in during the visit. Visitors are urged to only bring in those items that are deemed necessary.

All gifts and packages for the clients shall be identified and inspected by security officers on ASSA, ITU, CRU, OC, EH or by the nurse supervisor/designee upon entering Cedarview or Dorothea Dix prior to being allowed to the visiting area.

A CGT or PA must be assigned to monitor the visitation area during all visits with clients. The CGT/PA, in the interest of providing the client with as much privacy as possible, does not have to sit with the client and visitors; however, they must maintain visual observation for the duration of the visit.

Visitors are not permitted to visit in the Recreation Hall, the wards, or any other client care areas. Clients are not permitted to get into vehicles with visitors and are

not permitted to leave the hospital grounds, without a pass, unless permission is granted by the Treatment Team.

Issues of a problematic nature noted by the monitoring staff during the visit should be documented in the client's progress notes on their chart.

Copies of this policy will be provided to any regulatory agency upon request, including LDH, and Health Standards Section. A copy of this policy and a link to ACT 367 can be found on the ELMHS SharePoint site and on the LDH/OBH public website.

VI. REVISION HISTORY

DATE	SUMMARY OF REVISION
07.10.2023	Added language from ACT 367

VII. Authorized By

Chief of Staff	Print Name:	Signature:	Date:
Chief Executive Officer	Print Name:	Signature:	Date:
Policy Owner	Print Name:	Signature:	Date:

APPENDIX

1. TITLE OF FORM ATTACHED
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