As COVID-19 continues to spread across the United States, New Hampshire hospitals and health systems are taking precautions to protect their facilities and mitigate transmission of the disease within them. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services now urges hospitals with emergency departments to screen all patients presenting in the ED for COVID-19. While each hospital and health system’s ability to limit facility access and screen patients, visitors, and vendors differs, hospitals and health systems across the state may consider taking the steps below to the extent practical.

Limitations on Number of Visitors:

• Identify limits or restrictions on the number of allowed visitors per patient.

• Take into consideration special populations such as end-of-life situations, pediatrics, obstetrics, or when a visitor is essential for the patient’s emotional well-being and care. Other situations such as discharge planning and continuity of care that involves family or friend support should be evaluated carefully.

• Consider additional restrictions for COVID-19 patients that are classified as known or suspected cases.

• All visitors should be asymptomatic and evaluated through screening mechanisms.

Facility Access:

• Identify limited/minimal entrance and exit sites for staff, emergency department patients and visitors, patients brought in by EMS, and all other patients, visitors, and vendors, and temporarily close non-essential entrance and exit points.

• Place signs at closed entrance points informing patients, visitors, and vendors that the entrance is closed and make sure signage clearly indicates where they should go to enter the facility. Consider monitoring closed entrances to be sure patients, visitors and vendors are not waiting unattended.

• Place signage on open entrance points asking patients, visitors, and vendors to put on a mask and inform staff if they have a travel history to a region with COVID-19, have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, and/or have signs and symptoms of respiratory illness.

• Store and secure masks away from access points inside external doors and within eyesight of security or triage personnel.

• Require all vendors to enter through the main hospital entrance.

Emergency Department Screening:
• Implement a standard screening process and form to be used for all patients presenting in the emergency department to determine COVID-19 risk.

• Station hospital personnel at the entrance to the emergency department waiting room to conduct an initial screen prior to entering the facility.

• All screeners at entrances should wear level 1 masks (not N95 masks at this time).

• A surgical mask should be placed on any patient or visitor who screens positive for risk for COVID-19. Do not allow entry for any visitor who refuses to don a mask. If a patient who screens positive for risk for COVID-19 refuses a mask or cannot tolerate a mask due to condition, the patient should be placed directly into isolation.

• Patients who screen positive for risk for COVID-19 and are not experiencing an immediate threat to life or limb should be greeted by appropriately donned emergency department staff in the ambulance bay for further screening. Emergency department staff need to clear hallways and other areas of people prior to escorting an at-risk patient into the facility.

• Emergency department staff should conduct limited screening remotely in partnership with EMS via radio report prior to arrival. Patients who screen positively for risk for COVID-19 should be masked by EMS personnel in route.

• Ensure that all emergency department staff are educated on the screening processes established by the facility.

**Screening at Other Access Points:**

• To the extent practical, implement a standard screening protocol at open entranceways and/or main access points to the facility.

• Station hospital personnel (e.g. registration/security) at open entrances to the hospital to conduct screening on all patients, visitors and vendors.

• All screeners at entrances should wear level 1 masks (not N95 masks at this time).

• Use a standardized screening form for all patients, visitors, and vendors. Review current CDC and DPHS guidance for screening criteria. [https://www.nh.gov/covid19/healthcare/](https://www.nh.gov/covid19/healthcare/)

• A surgical mask should be placed on any patient or visitor who screens positive for risk for COVID-19. Do not allow entry for any visitor who refuses to don a mask. If a patient who screens positive for risk for COVID-19 refuses a mask or cannot tolerate a mask due to condition, the patient should be placed directly into isolation.

• Designate a path from entrances to the emergency department that is the only route for patients and visitors to get from the entrance to the emergency department and limit exposure outside of that path. The route should be clearly marked with directional signage.

• Ensure all staff that may conduct screenings are educated on the screening processes established by the facility.