

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: JUN 2 2010
From: Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N)
Subj: Hospital Visitation
To: VISN Directors (10N1-23)

1. As part of our commitment to patient-centered care, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) provides a health care environment that is welcoming to Veterans and their family and friends. Veterans should be allowed to decide whom to involve in their care and whom to call on for emotional or social support.
2. In keeping with this patient-centered approach, VHA abides by The Joint Commission requirements concerning patient rights and responsibilities including RI.01.02.01: "The hospital respects the patient's right to participate in decisions about his or her care, treatment, and services, and involves the patient's family in care, treatment, and services decisions to the extent permitted by the patient or surrogate decision-maker, in accordance with law and regulation."
3. The Joint Commission's glossary defines "family" as: "A person or persons who play a significant role in an individual's life. A family is a group of two or more persons united by blood or adoptive, marital, domestic partnership, or other legal ties. The family may also be a person or persons not legally related to the individual (such as a significant other, friend, or caregiver) whom the individual considers to be family. A family member may be the surrogate decision-maker if authorized to make care decisions for the individual should he or she lose decision-making capacity or choose to delegate decision making to another."
4. The following new elements under Standard RI.01.01.01 will take effect in 2011:

(Y): The hospital allows a family member, friend, or other individual to be present with the patient for emotional support during the course of stay. (Note: The hospital allows for the presence of a support individual of the patient's choice, unless the individual's presence infringes on others' rights, safety, or is medically or therapeutically contraindicated. The individual may or may not be the patient's surrogate decision maker or legally authorized representative.)

(Z): The hospital prohibits discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression.
5. Within 90 days, VA Medical Center Directors should review visitation policies, signage, brochures, patient information publications, and internet pages to ensure that information on visitation is consistent with these standards.



William Schoenhard, FACHE