

Keeping Families Informed during Pandemics – Scheduled Calls for Family Participation

During any outbreak of infectious disease, it is important to take steps to keep patient families informed and remember that family members are stewards of patient safety and integral to the healing of loved ones. The continued participation of a family member with a patient during a pandemic has both safety and psychological components.

Scheduled Support Person Calls provide families with a consistent time nurses will connect with the Support Person, who can then update the family. This should also help reduce calls to the nurses from multiple family members.

Upon admission to the hospital

“It is important for us to know who your Support Person is during your stay and their phone number. We will encourage you to call them to participate in key communication times like Bedside Shift Report, Nurse/Nurse Rounds, Discharge Instructions, and other decision making times.”

During Bedside Shift Report and Nurse/Physician Rounds/ Discharge Information Instructions

“Before we start Bedside Shift Report (or Nurse/Physicians Rounds) would you like to call your family (Support Person) so they can listen? We want to make sure that you and your family participate in the plan of care” (or offer to place the call for them).

Support Person Shift Update

Support Person Updates should be scheduled, particularly with patient family members who do not participate in Bedside Shift Report (particularly with patients who are not participating in Bedside Shift Report).

Scheduling of these updates should take into consideration family availability as well as the nurse’s knowledge of patient. Consider when the nurse has most knowledge, as well as availability to make call, as well as availability of family.

It is suggested that each hospital determines the scheduled times for calls so that families trust that we will call.

It is important that we obtain information from the patient as who we can provide the information to, and that the person has received the Privacy Code so that we can speak with them.

Initial Call

“This is (name of nurse) and I’ll be caring for (name of patient) for the next (#) of hours. We appreciate your understanding of the precautions in place to protect our patients, visitors, caregivers, and the community. We want to make sure that we keep you informed of (name of patient) condition and the plan of care. We will call you around (times determined by hospital) to update you on your loved one’s care. Will that time work for you?”

Shift Update Call

“This is (name of nurse) and I am caring for (name of patient) today. Is now still a good time for me to provide you with an update?”

Information that should be included:

- Generic in nature
- Condition (Stable, Unstable, Critical)
- Vital signs
- Amount of oxygen and if you were able to wean
- Condition of patient over the shift
- Any specific information specific to patient (change in condition, response to medications)
- Activity level (Resting comfortably, bathed, sitting)
- Pain and resolution

For ICU add:

- Improvements noted
- Examples: Able to wean the ventilator a little, lowered the oxygen, same ventilator settings, increased the amount of support to maintain oxygen level

For all calls, end the conversation with:

- What questions or concerns do you have?
 - Answer questions if possible
 - If family has clinical questions you cannot answer: “Thank you for that question. I will need to ask someone from the physician team reach out to you to provide an update later on today.”
- Manage up the caregivers:
 - “We are taking care of (Name) safely and compassionately. He/She is in great hands! Is there anything you want me to ask him/her for you?”

Support Person Update Communication Information

Info for staff for calls

Patient Label

Support Person: _____

Best Phone Number: _____

Secondary Number: _____

Does the Support Person want a call at the AM update? _____

Does the Support Person want a call at the PM update? _____

PIN Number or Privacy Code _____