

**To:** All staff and physicians  
**From:** Margaret Melanson, Vice President, Quality and Patient-Centred Care  
**Date:** April 7, 2022  
**Re:** **Changes to Designated Support Person Program**

### **14-day length of stay no longer required for DSP qualification**

To mitigate the critical risk of staff shortages, effective immediately, patients who require physical and/or emotional support will be permitted to have one fully vaccinated Designated Support Person (DSP).

This includes inpatients who are admitted for **less than 14 days**, Emergency Department visits and outpatient and ambulatory care appointments. All other existing patient eligibility criteria for a DSP remains in place.

DSPs are different than social visitors and can provide both physical and/or emotional support as defined by the patient in collaboration with the health care provider. These cases will no longer be considered an exception and executive director approval is no longer required.

DSPs must still complete the online Infection and Prevention (IPC) DSP education, pass screening upon entry, which will include verification of DSP education, and must follow all IPC guidelines. DSP support will help enhance patient care, especially on nursing units experiencing staffing shortages.

### **Online education requirements for DSPs**

The current process to pre-approve DSPs will remain the same, however the code that was previously used to complete the education has been removed to simplify the education process.

Just in Time education will be provided to DSPs whose presence is required during unplanned visits/hospital stays or emergency situations such as end-of-life events,

premature labour, etc. A list of approved DSPs must be provided to screeners as per the current process.

### Communication of DSP program changes

The DSP program changes are operational in nature and as such will only be communicated **internally** to Horizon health care workers. The DSP documents are currently being revised to reflect these changes and will be accessible on the [DSP Skyline page](#) as soon as possible.

It is noted that DSP IPC Guidelines are in place to provide guidance in relation to:

- Compassionate visitation from DSPs who are a close contact and/or are a confirmed case of COVID-19 [[IPC Guidance: Compassionate Exemption for Asymptomatic \(Close Contact of COVID-19\) or COVID-19 Positive Designated Support Person for End of Life Visitation – All Phases](#)]
- Unvaccinated DSPs who are accompanying or supporting patients at end of life, urgent or critical care, birth and/or children (IPC DSP Vaccination Guidelines)
- DSPs who have travelled internationally ([Infection Prevention and Control Guidance: Management of Designated Support Persons \(DSPs\) with Travel Risk Factors \(including Compassionate Visitation\) During COVID-19 – Red Phase](#))
- DSPs providing support on a nursing unit experiencing an exposure or an outbreak (DSP Operational Plan, Section 2, page 3)

Additional DSP information is available on [Skyline](#)  
or by emailing [DSP-PSD@HorizonNB.ca](mailto:DSP-PSD@HorizonNB.ca).