



Clergy Visitation Guidelines

The Inspira Hospital system values the health and well-being of our patients on every level, including the spiritual. In a sincere effort to facilitate contact and ministry between yourself and members of your faith community we grant Clergy Visitation privileges to clergy and lay ministers in local houses of worship. Our desire is to do all we can to facilitate your visit and to put the least amount of obstacles between you and your vital ministry to your congregant and our patient. It is important, however, to understand that clergy visitation privileges are just that ... privileges and not rights. In an effort to serve our patients well (which includes security considerations), we must clearly communicate guidelines that must be followed by anyone exercising Clergy Visitation privileges. It is important to note that anyone, member of the clergy or not, may visit a patient as a regular visitor within visitor guidelines and as long as there are no restrictions in place. Clergy Visitation privileges afford you several added benefits beyond those of a regular visitor, however. Some of these include:

1. You will not be counted as a visitor as it applies to the limits on number of visitors a patient may have.
2. You may be allowed to see a patient in emergency situations outside of visiting hours.
3. You will have easier access to patients – especially within Maternity, Pediatrics, MSICU and the ED.
4. You will receive a certain amount of deference from staff as you display your hospital-issued Clergy Badge.

These benefits can be a crucial tool in your ministry to your congregants – and we desire to facilitate that ministry as much as possible! It is critical, however, that you grasp some of our concerns as a hospital system.

1. **The protection of our patients.** What may seem like needless and over-the-top protections to you are actually expressions of the desire to do all we can to protect our patients.
2. **The privacy of our patients.** There are serious HIPAA considerations with clergy visitation. Please carefully read the HIPAA information sheet and ask any clarification questions before signing the agreement.
3. **The positive experience of our patients.** As uplifting and encouraging as your visit may be to our patient, it could also have the exact opposite effect for others in our patient population. While we gladly welcome your ministry to your congregants and those who have specifically requested you – the hospital does not welcome unsolicited approaches to patients who have not requested your visit.

In the following pages we will briefly address and expand each of these concerns.

The Protection of our Patients

- We must account for everyone who is in the building at all times. By accepting and wearing the Clergy Badge you agree to sign in and sign out every single time you visit the hospital. This is not optional. Failure to follow this procedure is to forfeit clergy visitation privileges.
- The Clergy Badge is the sole possession of the hospital system and must be surrendered upon expiration [unless renewed], as well as immediately upon the request of any staff member. Any confiscation of a badge will be reviewed by this department and you will be afforded an opportunity to share your thoughts – but a Clergy Badge must be surrendered immediately and willingly on the spot when it is requested by a hospital employee. Badges may not be kept as “keepsakes” or memorabilia, but must be returned in the event of a move, expiration, or any other reason they are not being used for the purpose issued. All expired or no-longer-in-use badges must be returned to the Office of Spiritual Care – and you agree to do so when you accept the badge. If you cannot agree with these stipulations, please do not complete the application process.
- Clergy members may not demand certain treatment or demand to see a patient. You can feel free to report to the Spiritual Care Department an incident where you felt you were denied a privilege you should have been afforded, but you may not disregard the instruction of a staff member in the moment or chew them out or badger them. In the spirit of your calling the Spiritual Care Department will hold you to a high standard and will not accept ungodly behavior by those wearing a badge issued by this department. Please understand that in the event of an altercation with a staff member we will not simply consider who was “technically right” and who was “technically wrong.” As a clergy member you will truly be held to the higher standard of “turning the other cheek,” even when wronged. We will seek to rectify the situation if you are wronged, but if your behavior in the situation was not calm and dignified, you may well need to surrender your clergy visitation privileges regardless of your “rightness” in the issue. If you consider this to be too high of a standard, or if you are prone to stand-offs and demanding your way, you truly should not apply for this badge.
- Badges may only be used by the individual for whom it is issued. Any badge being used by someone else will be immediately confiscated.
- Expired badges must be surrendered immediately. You will need to get a visitor’s pass until you apply for and receive a renewed badge.
- You must defer to staff at all times and be aware of your surroundings. We need your immediate and full cooperation as situations develop around you.
- You may not enter any restricted areas or areas marked “For Staff Only” unless directed to do so by a staff member. The Clergy Badge does NOT grant you access to every area of the hospital. Please be respectful if ever stopped, questioned or instructed by a staff member.

- Clergy members may freely access general hospital areas (unless otherwise instructed by a staff member), but must first check with staff before entering Maternity, Pediatrics, the Emergency Department (ED), Behavioral Health, NICU or Pediatric ED.
- The protection of our patients (and yourself) extends to hand hygiene. We ask that you wash your hands (or apply gel) every single time you enter and exit a patient room. Any staff member has the duty to stop and remind you to do this if you are not complying. Patients know to be watching for this. You agree to this by accepting the Clergy Badge.
- Please be aware of Isolation Signs posted on room doors. Never enter a room with an Isolation Sign before receiving explicit instructions from the nurse.
- You may not administer communion or give food or drink of any kind to any patient without the permission of their nurse.
- You must submit accurate up-to-date contact information in your application. You are responsible for updating contact information with the Spiritual Care Department when anything changes. You are also responsible to update the Spiritual Care Department concerning changes in your place of worship since badges are issued in connection with local and specific houses of worship. You may not continue to use a badge issued through your former house of worship without updating information on current house of worship with this department and satisfying any requests.

The Privacy of our Patients

Please carefully read the HIPAA information sheet and ask any clarification questions before signing your agreement. Please understand that we are seeking to educate you on the responsibilities of a law ALREADY in place. This law ALREADY applies to you. It is not something imposed on you by our health system, but by the Federal Government.

The Positive Experience of our Patients

- As you visit your congregants in our hospital, or those who have specifically requested your presence, we ask that you remember their vulnerable condition and their need for encouragement and hope. Thank you for leaving difficult or confrontational topics for some other time and place! Thank you for being sensitive to where they are as they seek to recover in our hospital.
- No proselytizing efforts of any kind are acceptable in the hospital. You may not randomly pass out tracts or literature of any kind. You may not leave literature in waiting areas. You may not go door-to-door or patient-to-patient. Patients are visited regularly through the Spiritual Care Department. If you wish to participate in this effort we would be delighted to process and vet you as a Spiritual Care Volunteer. Any clergy member not complying with these guidelines will immediately be asked to surrender their badge. This is not meant

to negate or veto legitimate spontaneous ministry. You may well encounter a situation where you were at the right place at the right time and could genuinely be a help and blessing to someone. By all means, please do so. You may not, however, go around randomly soliciting interaction for the purpose of promoting your church, your ministry or your theological views. You MAY interact with a patient you do not know or did not come to see if requested to do so by staff, patient or family. As members of the staff visually identify you as a clergy member and make requests of you to minister to a patient in need, you may choose to oblige. Please remember in these cases to be very aware of not pushing your own agenda but of serving the patient.

- We ask that any patient request for privacy, hesitancy to engage in conversation, or attempt to bring a visit to a close be immediately honored. Please do not, under any circumstances, over-stay your welcome, push yourself on a patient or be insensitive to their needs or desires, even if the patient is your congregant.
- You may not understand, agree with, or wish to comply with these guidelines. We would fully understand this and respect your position. Please understand, however, that by accepting the Clergy Badge you are willingly binding yourself to following every one of them. You may not accept the badge and then choose to select guidelines to disregard based on “conscience” or convenience. If you have real and strong objections, and do not plan to fully cooperate with these regulations, the only honorable thing to do is not apply for or receive a Clergy Badge from this department.

Please sign the blank on the application page (#4) signifying that you have read, understood and will seek to comply with these guidelines.