

Tips for developing a guideline for guardian presence in ED

The following are suggestions on how to approach developing a guideline for guardian presence in the ED for a child with mental or behavioral health condition(s) experiencing ED boarding

- There are no widely accepted standards for guardian presence.
- If your hospital has an inpatient pediatric unit, they may have a guardian visitation policy that could be considered for use in the ED
- Consider developing a guideline instead of a policy to allow for flexibility depending on the unique situations that can arise with each patient and their guardian(s).
- If your hospital does not have a pre-existing guideline, review ED staff concerns and past experiences with guardians when starting to draft a guideline.
- Items to consider when creating a new guideline:
 - Guardians may either be a support or trigger for children who present to the ED in behavioral health crises. The guideline should allow for flexibility to adjust guardian presence, if needed.
 - If a patient will likely be boarding in the ED, consider conversing with the child alone and asking the child his/her/their preference around guarding presence while in the ED.
 - After understanding how the guardian's presence can best support the child, have a conversation with both child and guardian to establish a schedule for guardian ED visitation. When having this conversation, make sure to emphasize that everyone wants the best thing for the child while in the ED and the goal of the ED is to support the child and family and keep the child safe.
 - A parent should always be expected to be present when the child is ready for transfer out of the ED.
 - Additional times to consider to have a parent present:
 - If your mental health clinicians round on these patients at a specific time each day, parents should be asked to be present in the ED during that time, if feasible.
 - Have your ED staff review the proposed guideline.
- Once you have written your guideline, organize a meeting between your division's leadership, legal department, hospital leadership, and risk management to review the guideline.