POLICY TITLE: **Clergy Member Visitation During a Declared Public Health Emergency**	IDENTIFICATION NUMBER: **RI135**

POLICY LEVEL:	Division	**ORIGINATION/EFFECTIVE DATE**	11/4/2026
FACILITY:	Louisiana RISE Community Hospital Sites	**REVIEW CYCLE:**	Two Years
DEPARTMENT(S):	All departments	**LAST REVIEW DATE:**	10/28/2026
		LAST REVISION DATE:	10/28/2026
REVISION:	New		

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of RISE Community Hospital to permit in-person visitation by members of the clergy when requested by a patient or the patient's legal or designated representative during a declared PHE. Visitation shall not be categorically prohibited, but remains subject to reasonable, clinically justified time, place, and manner restrictions established in consultation with medical and infection prevention staff.

PURPOSE

To establish clear, uniform guidelines ensuring patients receive pastoral and spiritual care from members of the clergy during a declared Public Health Emergency (PHE), while implementing appropriate infection prevention measures to safeguard patients, visitors, and healthcare personnel.

SCOPE

- Applies to all patients at all Louisiana sites
- Applies to all staff

PROCEDURES

Availability of Policy

1. Public & Patient Access: A paper copy of this policy and procedure shall be made available without cost to any patient, legal representative, or designated representative upon request.
2. Clergy Access: An electronic copy (or direct link) shall be provided promptly via email or messaging to any clergy member upon request.
3. Website Accessibility: Within 24 hours of establishment or material revision, this policy shall be posted on and directly accessible from the homepage of the hospital's public website.
4. A copy shall be submitted to the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) Health Standards Section during initial licensure surveys.
5. This policy and all operational logs shall remain immediately accessible for review upon request by LDH at any time.

Screening & Access Requirements

1. RISE Community Hospital grants special consideration and scheduling priority to clergy visits requested for patients receiving end-of-life, comfort, or palliative care. These visits shall be facilitated rapidly with dedicated clinical coordination.
2. Infection Screening:
    a. Prior to entering any clinical area, each clergy member must undergo health and infection screening in accordance with current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and hospital infection control protocols.
    b. Screening includes symptom assessment, exposure evaluation, and/or diagnostic testing where clinically indicated by PHE protocols.
3. A clergy member shall be denied entry or asked to leave under any of the following circumstances:

a. The clergy member exhibits obvious signs or symptoms of an active infectious agent or communicable disease.
b. The clergy member tests positive for the infectious agent associated with the PHE or another communicable illness.
c. The clergy member refuses to submit to mandatory screening or testing protocols.
d. The clergy member refuses to comply with established time, place, and manner restrictions or refuses to follow staff safety directives.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) & Infection Control

1. Clergy members must wear appropriate PPE (e.g., surgical masks, N95 respirators, gowns, gloves, eye protection) as dictated by the patient's clinical status and unit isolation category.
2. Necessary PPE will be supplied to the clergy member upon entry or unit arrival, accompanied by instruction on proper donning, doffing, and hand hygiene.
3. Patients maintain the right to consensual, non-sexual physical contact (e.g., hand-holding, prayer touch, laying on of hands, or hugging) with clergy members, provided appropriate hand hygiene and required protective barriers/PPE are maintained.

Reasonable Time, Place, and Manner Restrictions

1. Any visitation restriction must be formulated in consultation with appropriate medical personnel (Attending Physician, Chief Medical Officer, or Infection Control Officer) to mitigate transmission risks or address acute clinical instability.
2. Visits must occur within the patient's private room or designated clinical isolation area; congregating in hallways, waiting rooms, or shared staff spaces is prohibited.
3. Nurse Supervisors may limit visit duration during peak clinical intervention periods, sterile procedures, or resuscitation events.
4. Visits must be coordinated through the Nurse Supervisor and Patient Access to avoid clinical workflow disruption, with exceptions made for urgent end-of-life sacraments.

Regulatory Hierarchy & Emergency Orders

1. The hospital shall enforce any directive or emergency rule issued by the Louisiana State Health Officer that modifies or limits hospital visitation during a declared PHE.
2. If any federal department, agency, or regulatory body (e.g., CMS, CDC, HHS) issues rules, guidelines, or conditions of participation regarding hospital visitation during a PHE that are more restrictive than state standards, the hospital will adhere strictly to the more restrictive federal requirements.

Visitation Workflow Procedure

1. The clinical care team or Patient Advocate logs the patient's request for a clergy visit in the electronic health record (EHR).
2. Designated screening staff verify the clergy member's identity, complete required symptom/temperature checks or testing, and log clearance.
3. The clergy member is directed to the clinical unit, provided appropriate PPE, instructed on required hygiene practices, and informed of the patient's room boundaries.
4. Unit staff document the completion of the visit in the nursing notes, including any exceptions granted for end-of-life care.

APPROVAL

POLICY OWNER	Matt Alewine, RN, MSN Chief Nursing Officer
COMMITTEE	Patient Care & Safety Committee
MEDICAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	Dr. Jessica Hetherington MD Chief Medical Officer
GOVERNING BODY	RISEONE Governing Body

REVISION	CHANGES	DEPARTMENT APPROVAL	COMMITTEE APPROVAL	MEC APPROVAL	GB APPROVAL
New	Initial Release	10/28/2026	10/28/2026	11/2/2026	11/2/2026