



## Support Person in the Operating Room (OR)

PREPARED BY: Jessica Butler BSN RN Nurse Manager OR	PAGE: 1 of 2	EFFECTIVE DATE: March 27, 2023	POLICY NUMBER: WIH-SURG-017
REVIEWED BY: Erin Stender, RN, BSN, CNOR, Director of Surgical Services	REVIEWED BY:	REVIEWED BY:	APPROVED BY: Kim Francis, PHD, RN, PHCNS-BC, Chief Nursing Officer

- I. Purpose.** The purpose of this [*Support Person in the Operating Room (OR)*] policy (this “Policy”) is to define a process for providing comfort to a patient in the OR from a person who may not be a hospital employee.
- II. Scope.** This policy applies to minors, surgical patients with special needs, and patients undergoing Cesarean Sections.
- III. Policy.** It is the policy of Women & Infants Hospital that a support person be allowed into the operating room with a patient.
- IV. Definitions.** Terms not already defined in this Policy have the following meanings:
- (a) Support Person – An individual personally known to a patient who provides non-medical, physical, emotional, and informational support to the patient. The Support Person fosters a peaceful environment by assisting the patient to understand procedures, provides comfort through distraction during painful moments, positive reinforcement, encouragement, and reassurance, and may act as an advocate.
  - (b) Minor – Persons less than eighteen years of age (See policy: [Informed Consent](#))
  - (c) Persons with special needs – Persons with clinical and/or functional developmental disabilities who require assistance for their disabilities which may be medical, mental or psychological.
- V. Procedure.**
- (a) For surgical patients who are minors or have special needs and will have a support person accompany them to the OR:
    - (1) The first member of the Surgical Services team that recognizes that a patient would benefit from having a support person in the Operating Room (OR) will notify the Director of Surgical Services or designee and the Anesthesia Department.
    - (2) The request to accommodate a support person in the OR will be evaluated by the team (Anesthesia, Nursing and Surgeon).
    - (3) Upon approval by the team (Anesthesia, Nursing, and Surgeon):
      - i. One support person is designated to be present in the Operating Room suite.

- ii. Surgical attire (disposable scrubs/coverall, hat and mask) is donned by the support person before entering the OR.
  - iii. Patient and support person are escorted into the operating suite by OR personnel.
  - iv. Support person is directed to stay at patient's side during the start of anesthesia induction.
  - v. After induction of anesthesia, the Support person is escorted out of the operating suite by an OR staff member.
- (b) For patients undergoing C-Section:
  - (1) C-Section patients are allowed to have a support person present during periods of the procedure deemed appropriate by the surgical team (Anesthesia, Nursing, and Surgeon).
    - i. Requests for more than one support person are considered on a case by case basis based on:
      - a. The ability of the additional support person to provide a higher level of comfort and support to the patient
      - b. The number of personnel present for the procedure and the ability to manage the environment safely.
      - c. A doula is considered part of the care team and is not the same as a support person. A doula is permitted to provide care in the OR, except in an emergency. The doula may enter the Operating Room after spinal is placed and patient is prepped and draped.
  - (2) Surgical attire (disposable scrubs, hat, shoe covers, and surgical mask) is donned by the support person before entering the OR.
  - (3) After the patient is positioned, skin preparation is applied, and the patient is draped, the support person may be escorted into the operating room.
  - (4) The Support person is directed to stay at patient's side during the procedure unless otherwise instructed by OR personnel. Support person must remain seated for safety.
  - (5) The Support person may be allowed to remain with the patient for the duration of the procedure unless the circumstances of the procedure deem otherwise as exemplified by:
    - i. The patient's procedure becomes an emergency situation
    - ii. The support person cannot tolerate the OR environment
    - iii. The patient undergoes general anesthesia
  - (6) The Support person is escorted out of the operating room by OR personnel when appropriate.
- (c) In the event of a local, state, or national disaster such as a pandemic, the conditions for allowing support persons in the OR are subject to change.

**REFERENCES:** N/A

**APPROVAL/REVISION:**

08/1987: Initial Version of Policy approved

January 1990, July 2002, February 2004, October 2007, March 2011, March 2014, April 2017, April

2020: Revision approved

03/27/2023: Revision approved

**REPLACES:** Change policy number 12/2021 - replaces WIH-PT-1128