

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **KHSC to require proof of full vaccination for registered family visitors**

**Kingston, ON – October 5, 2021** – In a continued effort to protect patients, families and staff, Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC) will soon require all individuals visiting inpatients at either Kingston General Hospital (KGH) or Hotel Dieu Hospital (HDH) site to show proof of vaccination.

This policy will go into effect on October 22, 2021 and aligns with the roll-out of the provincial digital vaccine passport program. It also matches the deadline for all KHSC staff to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

“As the provider of specialized care for more than a half-million people southeastern Ontario, we are taking this additional necessary step to protect the most vulnerable patients in the region, their families, and our staff from COVID-19,” says Elizabeth Bardon, Incident Commander for KHSC. “We must make every effort to ensure that we are able to continue to offer care in the face of any upcoming COVID-19 waves in Ontario.”

Registered family visitors will be asked to show proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 along with photo ID at either hospital's entrance, similar what is already required to access venues such as restaurants and theatres. This also mirrors the approach being taken by other hospitals in Ontario.

“We anticipate that exemptions to this policy will be rare, but may be made in situations such as life-threatening emergencies where family presence without delay is absolutely vital for the patient, family partner and care team,” says Bardon. “Any exemption will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.”

To reduce the risks associated with crowding during the pandemic, KHSC currently limits the number of family visitors to two registered individuals (one-at-a-time) per-inpatient and has already been strongly encouraging patients to choose only registered family visitors who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

“We recognize the important role of families in the lives of hospitalized patients. This is an additional way that families can help to keep our hospital safe for their loved ones. Further, we consulted with our patient experience advisors who support taking these further precautions to help keep people safe, and limit future COVID outbreaks within the hospital,” says Bardon.

“We know that unvaccinated individuals played a significant role in a COVID outbreak at our KGH site this summer. The science is also clear: the COVID vaccine not only decreases an individual's chances of spreading the virus, but also decreases the severity of COVID symptoms, risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19. This is an important step in ensuring that we keep our patients and families, as well as staff safe.”

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