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JUDITH M. PERSICHILLI, RN, BSN, MA
Commissioner

March 29, 2020

TO: Acute Care Hospitals Licensed Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 8:43G

FROM: Judith M. Persichilli, R.N., B.S.N., M.A. 
Commissioner

SUBJECT: One Support Person in Labor and Delivery Settings

On March 9, 2020 Governor Philip D. Murphy issued Executive Order 103, declaring the existence of a Public Health Emergency, pursuant to the Emergency Health Powers Act, N.J.S.A. 26:13-1 et seq., and a State of Emergency, pursuant to the Disaster Control Act, in the State of New Jersey for Coronavirus 2019 Disease ("COVID-19"). In recognition of the fact that the virus that causes COVID-19 is easily transmitted, especially in group settings, it is prudent for hospitals to implement restrictions on visitors to the facility. Such limitations must take into consideration patient care and well-being.

The Department of Health (Department) considers one support person essential to patient care throughout labor, delivery, and the immediate postpartum period. Therefore, hospitals are required to allow one designated support person to be with the expectant mother during these times. This person can be the patient's spouse, partner, sibling, doula, or another person they choose. In these settings, this person will be the only support person allowed to be present during the patient's care. They may not transfer these duties to another person. This restriction must be explained to the patient in plain terms, upon arrival or, ideally, prior to arriving at the hospital. Hospital staff should ensure that patients fully understand this restriction, allowing them to decide who they wish to identify as their support person.

Labor and delivery support persons must be asymptomatic for COVID-19 and must not be a suspect or recently confirmed case. Additionally, hospital staff must screen the support person for symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, or shortness of breath), conduct a temperature check prior to entering the clinical area, and every twelve hours thereafter, and screen for potential exposures to individuals testing positive for COVID-19. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be given to and worn by designated support persons. Once in the labor and delivery unit, the designated support person must have extremely limited access to other areas of the hospital and not be permitted to leave and re-enter the unit.

Hospitals may restrict the presence of a designated support person should a shortage of PPE require use of the resources by direct patient care givers.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact Ms. Jean DeVitto, Executive Director, Certificate of Need and Healthcare Facility Licensure program, at jean.devitto@doh.nj.gov.