

# The Benefits of Visitor Management



There's no doubt: patients benefit from visits from their loved ones. Over the last two decades, the rise in patient-centered care across the United States has resulted in less restrictive visitor policies to align with patient needs and desires.

In early 2020, healthcare organizations faced the COVID-19 pandemic and quickly had to restrict their visitor policies to protect those inside the facility. This pandemic, along with other recent emergency situations, is bringing overdue attention to healthcare visitor management. While healthcare organizations have long managed visitors to varying degrees of formality, now many are considering whether their visitor management approach needs to be addressed.



As the U.S. healthcare system navigates the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, healthcare organizations are evaluating visitor management in a new way: the concern is no longer just about managing pre-pandemic levels of visitors entering healthcare facilities every day, but also being able to control the number of visitors allowed in a facility in a flexible system that can be scaled up or down depending on multiple factors.

These issues are directly related to the safety of employees, patients, and guests, and call for a level of detail within visitor management that traditional systems of paper-and-pencil are entirely incapable of providing. As a result, a growing number of healthcare organizations are replacing their paper visitor check-in logs and simple digital forms with more effective visitor management systems.

Google Trends reflects an increased interest in visitor management, showing that search trends indicate an upward trend in searches for “visitor management policy.” While the term ranked low in popularity from August 2019 on, it skyrocketed in March 2020 and reached peak popularity in June 2020.

Visitors can present a risk to healthcare organizations, and managing that risk is an important aspect of security. Administrators need reliable visitor management systems that can be easily adjusted, especially as facility visitor policies vary due to each community's presence of infectious disease, crime, or other factors. Healthcare organizations need visitor management systems that can flex: going from low to high volumes of visitors, managing repeat visitors such as family members, reinforcing limited or extended hours of entry, and the challenge of managing visitors through single points of entry to ensure health and safety screenings occur. They also seek solutions that are strong in confidentiality and reliability, allow them to quickly assess who is or was on-site, and that can help ensure they meet established standards of compliance through quick, accessible reporting.

An effective visitor management system monitors who visitors are, who they are visiting, when they are on-site and which areas of a facility they are authorized to enter. Effective visitor management also involves confirming the individual's identification, capturing a photo, and compiling other relevant information about him or her that could impact the individual's visit or the organization as a whole.

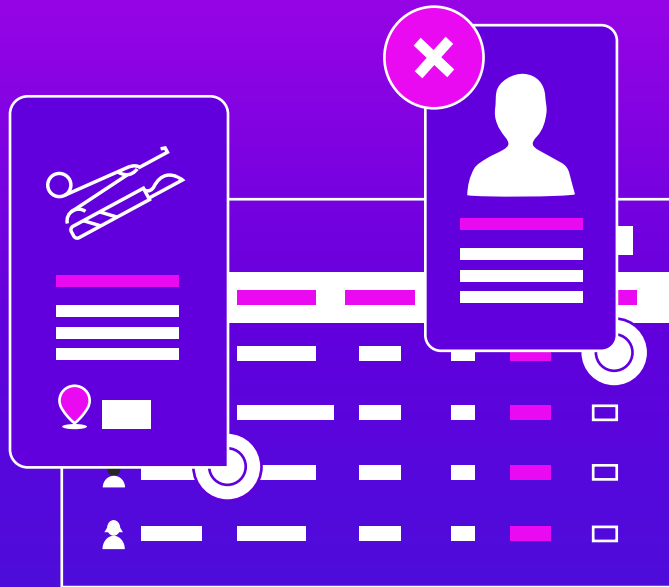
Advanced technology has been applied to create systems to address these visitor management issues and provide a more secure environment for patients, staff and visitors. By increasing the visibility of visitors entering and leaving a facility, facility managers are able to provide a safe, more welcoming and secure experience for everyone, whether the experience is restricted more than usual or not.

# The Benefits of Visitor Management Platforms

A strong visitor management system offers significant benefits:

## Visitor policies are centrally defined and managed

An organization's policies and procedures for visitor management should be centrally defined and automated during the visitor's time on site. Centralizing the various aspects of visitor management ensures healthcare organizations are carrying out their visitor policies. Automating the process of visits enables administrators to ensure patients and staff are protected to the greatest extent and all aspects of a visit comply with the organization's policies and regulations.



## Visitor activity is cross-referenced with vendor data

When a facility's visitor management system is integrated with its vendor management system, administrators can clearly view and monitor all on-site visitor activity as well as mitigate the risk associated with the chance of vendor representatives entering a facility without the proper authorizations. Administrators benefit from a single report that helps to meet the reporting requirements of internal departments, auditors, and governing bodies.

Out-of-compliance vendors attempting to check in through visitor systems can put the health and safety of your patients and staff at risk, as well as pose financial risks to your organization.

## Visitor access can be controlled and limited

Effective visitor management programs have the capability to limit specific visitors, control visitor volume by department, and restrict visitor access during certain time periods, to ensure patient, provider, staff, and visitor protection. Passwords can be added for an extra level of protection and security for patients.

## The system is easy to install, use, and maintain

Ease of operation and speed of check-in ensures that a visitor management system is used to the fullest extent to address the requirements of the organization. When a visitor registers, the system should capture information from their identification to populate fields in an enrollment screen. The system should also capture a photo from the visitor's ID or from a webcam at the registration site. Making check-ins quick encourages utilization, and creates a safer lobby area that is free of waiting lines.



## ON-SITE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE VISITOR MANAGEMENT

### Minimize and control visitor entry points

Controlling access to your facility is accomplished by limiting the number of public entrances and making sure they are monitored. The main building lobby is generally the most effective location for centralized visitor registration. Another common check-in point is an entrance close to a parking area. A staff member should be assigned to monitor the check-in system, help the visitors check in, and hand them their visitor access badge. Regardless of the location of your entry point, ensure you have clear outdoor and indoor signage to route visitors to the right location; nothing is more frustrating than hoping to visit a loved one and getting lost while trying to check in.

## Have a checkout process or automate checkouts

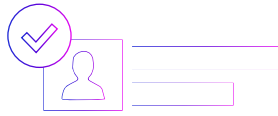
Checkout procedures can be as important for the safety of your facility as check-ins. Facilities may require visitors to turn in the visitor access badge to a designated staff member or area when they check out. With this process in place, you will have the information on who is inside your facility at any given time and can more readily ensure the safety and security of patients and staff. A strong visitor management platform will allow you to set automated checkout thresholds so that visitors are regularly checked out at a specific time each day.

## Make it easy to understand

Informing visitors about the new system and clearly outlining your visitor procedures through signage helps first-time visitors quickly learn how to use the system and reduces the need for additional assistance from your staff. Teaching staff about all aspects of your visitor policy. Every staff member should know where to direct visitors for check-in, how to use the system, and why utilization of the visitor management system is crucial for the safety of patients and staff, alike.



## Additional Benefits of Visitor Management Systems



### Improved productivity

Multiple visitors can be processed simultaneously with the use of more than one check-in station and the time per check-in will be accelerated.



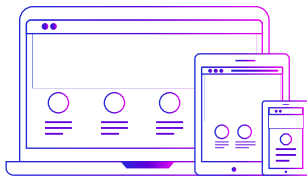
### Improved visitor service

Because they can be checked in quickly, visitors are made to feel expected and welcome; returning visitors are recognized in the system and can check in instantly.



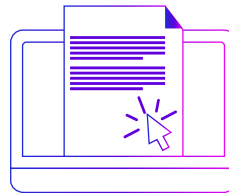
### Highest level of safety

Because visitation can be tightly controlled at specific times, staff and patient families can be assured that they are protected by the highest level of security.



### Scalability

An organization can easily add on or move check-in stations to accommodate changing conditions, growth, or the number of visitors.



### Enhanced emergency response

If the building must be evacuated, the system can be used to determine the presence and location of visitors within the facility.



### Improved reporting

Visitor management systems can offer reports of who is currently on-site, as well as historical information about who previously visited.

Effective visitor management systems should be able to expand and adapt to the growing and changing needs of your organization, whether in normal operations or during pandemic or emergency situations. Visitor management should be scalable and effective in one building as well as across a multi-entity organization.

Well-planned, thorough implementation of a visitor system's entire functionality ensures that visitor management works to support overall building security. At its best, visitor management works as an integral part of an organization's compliance and safety programs. Its built-in capabilities should include the ability to deny access to individual visitors, notifications, delegated administration, and escalations and reminders, while providing a full audit trail. The visitor management system's administrators must ensure that all visitor-related activities take place according to the organization's policies and procedures, which are integrated into the system.

Good visitor management provides security and protection, minimizes risk, and ensures that patients, staff, and visitors have the highest level of safety. Ultimately, visitor management helps improve the overall visitor and patient experience, enhance working conditions for staff members, and alleviate the risks to which many hospitals are vulnerable without security measures in place.

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