



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO MEDICINE

Comer Children's

Child Life and Family Education Special Events Visitor Information

Thank you for sharing your time and talents with the children and families at the University of Chicago Children's Hospital. We are delighted that you are coming to visit. Because many of our entertainers and visitors often inquire about our patients and what to expect from their visit to our hospital, we have developed this information packet. Feel free to review the information and please do not hesitate to call the Child Life Special Events Coordinator at 773-795-5135 if you have any questions. Thank you again, and we look forward to your visit.

Children and Families in the Hospital

Because hospitalized children and families often miss events in their neighborhood and schools, they look forward to special events from people in the community when they are in the hospital. Special events are often the highlight of the week for these children and families. It gives them something to look forward to and it breaks up their daily medical routine. You will often find that the patients are excited about your visit and are eager to participate. You may also encounter children and families who are feeling sick or stressed due to their hospitalization. As a result, some of the children may have less energy and are not as outgoing as others. This is probably because they are not feeling well. In these situations, special events are particularly important to families because they serve as a distraction or an opportunity to temporarily escape from the stressful situation. Even though you may not see them responding or participating, the children are benefiting from your special visit.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability ACT (HIPPA)

HIPPA requires that health care organizations ensure the privacy and security of patient and family information. Patient Privacy and confidentiality is extremely important. You will be asked to fill out a confidentiality agreement prior to the scheduled event. This is a hospital requirement of all visitors.

Suggestions for Interacting with Pediatric Patients

Many of you may have visited hospitals before and have interacted with pediatric patients. For those who haven't, here are some suggestions to maximize the many benefits your visit will have for our children and families.

- Although many children and families are already informed about your visit, it is important to introduce yourself to the children and tell them why you are here. Because children are often sensitive about their hospitalization and to ensure patient privacy, we suggest avoiding questions about the patient's reasons for hospitalization or length of hospitalization.
- The hospital can be an unfamiliar place or threatening environment for children. They may feel overwhelmed with new people and experiences. For this reason, it is beneficial to approach children slowly and bend down to their level to communicate with them. This slow approach will help the child relax and will show the child that you are not a threatening person.

- Due to altered physical characteristics, it is sometimes difficult to determine if a patient is a girl or a boy. To be on the safe side, it is helpful to ask the child their name and refer to them by name when asking them to participate or to answer questions.
- The patients and families we work with at UCCH come from very diverse religious backgrounds. Out of respect for our families' beliefs, we discourage the use of religious themes throughout storytelling, music, and any other performances.
- Many children in the hospital have decreased energy levels due to illness. In order to engage the children and hold their attention throughout your entire visit, it is best to have the performance last no longer than 30 to 35 minutes.

Safety Guidelines

- Due to hospital regulations, visitors coming to the hospital who will be interacting with patients must be sixteen years or older.
- Because we have limited space and because a large group of people can be overwhelming to young patients, we ask that a maximum of five people come for the event.
- If your visit involves serving food and drinks, please discuss this with the Special Events Coordinator in advance. We have guidelines to follow due to many patients being on special diets.
- Sometimes special events involve providing the patients with presents. To ensure the safety of the children, all gifts and stuffed animals must be new and unwrapped when brought to the hospital.
- Due to safety concerns, stuffed animals are not permitted for distribution to children under the age of 3 years old. The Special Events Coordinator can provide you with ideas for gifts, such as what gifts are appropriate and what the children and teenagers like.
- Performance and gifts should **not** include any live animals, rubber balloons, real or pretend guns or knives, or any other potentially harmful materials.
- Photographs are generally not encouraged; however, in some situations exceptions have been made. Because all patients must have signed photo consents from their parents, please discuss the possibility of photographs with the Special Events Coordinator in advance so proper arrangements can be made.

Infection Control Guidelines

- Due to infection control guidelines any person with a sore throat, fever or chills, cough, muscle aches and/or runny nose are not allowed to have interaction with patients.
- If you develop these symptoms prior to your performance please contact the Special Events Coordinator to reschedule.
- All materials used during your performance must be easily cleaned. Items that can not be wiped down are not allowed to be used. These items must be cleaned prior to each performance and between patients with a hospital grade disinfectant.

Costume Visitors

- All costumes must be cleaned immediately prior to visiting hospitalized children and their families. Due to infection control concerns we request that Comer Children's Hospital be the first or only event for a costume visitor on a given day.
- Costume visitors may only enter patient rooms when a child is not on ANY type of isolation. If a costume visitor accidentally enters the room of an isolation patient the visit must stop immediately after that room.
- Staff will use portable Purrell for patients and their family's hands prior to a costume visitor entering the room and once the visitor has exited the room.
- For developmental purposes, costume visitors are intended for children age 3 years old and older.
- All inpatient units must be completed prior to going to any other areas of the hospital.

Thank you again for your interest in our Child Life Program. We look forward to your visit with the patients and families at our hospital. It is my hope that these guidelines and suggestions are helpful in learning a little bit about our hospitalized children and in planning your visit. See you soon!