

# Helping Families Stay Connected

Dear Family,

In the best interest of all our patients and families during this flu season, Baystate Health is not allowing visitors under the age of 13. We realize that stress is placed upon children and families when a loved one is in the hospital. Being apart may be even more difficult. Below are some ideas to help families stay connected.

## **WHEN CHILDREN CANNOT VISIT, THEY CAN STILL STAY CONNECTED BY:**

- ☀️ Calling into the patient's room to share well-wishes, a special story, or a favorite song.
- ☀️ Drawing a colorful picture or banner to hang in the patient's room.
- ☀️ Creating a Care Page via the Baystate Children's Hospital link (ask your nurse for details)
- ☀️ Sending a text message or e-mail.
- ☀️ Sending in favorite DVDs, music, board games or toys with parents who are visiting the patient.
- ☀️ Mailing a handmade card or letter.
- ☀️ Sending pictures or videos of themselves via cell phone or internet.
- ☀️ Writing a story or journal about what they have been doing to share when the patient returns home.
- ☀️ Planning a little "Welcome Home" surprise or party.

## **IF YOU HAVE A CHILD AT BAYSTATE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL**

The Child Life Specialist assigned to your child can also help you individualize the information and support you may need for any children at home.

## **IT'S IMPORTANT FOR THE CHILDREN AT HOME TO UNDERSTAND:**

- ☀️ Information about their loved one's illness in a way they can understand and what steps are being taken to help them get well. Sometimes the fantasy of what children think is going on is worse than the reality.
- ☀️ Their feelings and concerns are important too, even though it seems much of the parent's attention has been given to the ill child or family member. Encourage children to talk about how they are feeling and discuss their day or special events.
- ☀️ They may be feeling that everything is topsy-turvy and routines are out of order. Explaining the schedule for their day, so they know who will be caring for them and when the parent may call or be home, will help soothe fears.
- ☀️ Their parent(s) seem more concerned, tired, or short-tempered than usual. It's okay to share that these are usual responses and things will be better when their sibling or family member returns home.