



JUNE 2020

SPECIAL EDITION

# NICU TALES:

# BORN IN THE AGE OF COVID



CAYDEN



RUTH



THOMAS



N I C U  
NURSE



HOW THREE FRIENDS UNITED FAMILIES  
AND GOT THE RULES CHANGED...  
IN THEIR FIRST TWO AND A HALF WEEKS

DEDICATED TO:

BABIES CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS, AND THE STRENGTH, COURAGE AND DETERMINATION YOU ALL SHOWED DURING YOUR STAY IN THE NICU, AND THE COMPASSION AND LOVE SHOWN BY ALL THOSE WHO CARED FOR YOU.



ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WERE TWO FAMILIES WHO WERE EXPECTING THEIR FIRST CHILDREN. THEY WERE VERY MUCH LOOKING FORWARD TO WELCOMING THEIR BABIES TO THE WORLD.

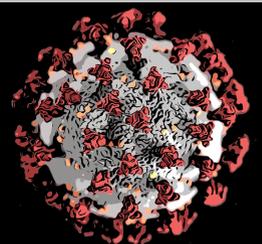
BABY CAYDEN, AND THE TWINS – RUTH AND THOMAS – DECIDED TO SURPRISE THEIR PARENTS A LITTLE EARLIER THAN PLANNED...



THIS MEANT THEY HAD TO SPEND SOME EXTRA TIME IN THE NICU AT ALTA BATES HOSPITAL IN THE CITY OF BERKELEY, WHICH WAS IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA IN THE U.S.A. ALL THREE BABIES ARRIVED WITHIN A FEW DAYS OF EACH OTHER.



THEIR PARENTS LOVED BEING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY, BUT THE BABIES HAD BEEN BORN AT A SPECIAL TIME – DURING A GLOBAL CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC CALLED COVID-19



THIS MEANT THAT THE HOSPITAL HAD PARTICULAR RULES TO PROTECT EVERYONE FROM COVID-19.



NICU Visiting Guidelines  
Effective March 16, 2020

## COVID-19 RULE SHEET



Alta Bates Summit Medical Center is dedicated to helping keep our patients, staff and community safe.

To help do this, we are limiting NICU visitors to 1 adult at a time with a blue band. We will continue to keep you updated with any changes to the visiting policy.

We remain in close communication with our Sutter Health Emergency Management Team, following the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the public health department. Please talk with your baby's doctor if you have any questions.

As a general reminder, please stay home if you have any signs of illness or suspect that you have been exposed to COVID-19. If you are not feeling well or have concerns that you have been exposed to COVID-19, please contact your doctor or the local health department.

Thank you for helping us keep the safety of your baby our #1 priority.

 Sutter Health

SOME RULES MADE SENSE, SUCH AS WASHING HANDS AND WEARING FACE MASKS... HOWEVER, OTHER RULES DID NOT. ESPECIALLY RULES THAT KEPT FAMILIES FROM BEING TOGETHER.

SO BABIES CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS DECIDED TO TAKE MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN (SMALL) HANDS...



FIRST, THEY ARRANGED FOR THEIR FATHERS TO MEET AND SHARE EXPERIENCES OF NEW FATHERHOOD...



THEN THEY ARRANGED FOR THEIR MOTHERS TO ALSO GET TOGETHER AND HEAR WHAT NEW MOTHERHOOD WAS LIKE ...

(DON'T ASK WHY THE ELBOWS ARE ALL TOGETHER?!)

3RD JUNE 2020



HOW MESSAGES WERE SENT IN 2020

THE PARENTS STARTED BY ASKING THE HOSPITAL WHETHER IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR BOTH PARENTS TO JOINTLY VISIT THEIR CHILDREN.

INITIALLY, THE HOSPITAL SAID "NO," AS THESE WERE THE RULES.

"THESE RULES DO NOT MAKE SENSE," THOUGHT BABIES CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS. THEY REALIZED THAT IF THESE RULES WERE IMPACTING THEM, THEN IT WOULD ALSO BE IMPACTING MANY OTHER BABIES AND FAMILIES IN HOSPITALS ACROSS CALIFORNIA AND EVEN ACROSS THE NATION. THIS DID NOT SEEM FAIR.

SO THEY DECIDED TO WRITE A LETTER.

**THESE RULES DO NOT MAKE SENSE  
AND ARE KEEPING FAMILIES APART**



To: Sutter Health Senior Leadership  
From: Parents of Alta Bates Health Intensive Care Unit patients  
Date: 3 June 2020

#### Covid-19 visitation for NICU and SHAMS

We are parents of patients in Alta Bates Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU). First, we want to commend the world class medical staff of Labor & Delivery, Ante partum, Post partum and the NICU. We are writing to express our gratitude but also to gently flag some unintended consequences of Covid-19 policies that are taking place in other areas. We propose solutions below that – if appears from speaking to staff – requires Sutter Health to take action at a senior level in order for change to happen.

First, thanks to the swift decision-making, excellent diagnostic equipment, facilities to accommodate us and the teamwork to make rapid decisions on a facility development situation, both the parents and children's lives were saved over the past few days. The empathy, skill and professionalism shown by the medical staff at Alta Bates through every phase of our visits, was world class and left us with a lasting sense of connection to Alta Bates and the NICU. We write in the spirit of gratitude and partnership with the great facility in the mission of caring, not only for our little ones, but for the parents in NICUs regularly. We chose Alta Bates based on a recommendation from a friend whose wife's complex pregnancy (similar to ours) led to a delivery at 27 weeks last year, and that full of health baby today is thriving. Their experience made us feel Alta Bates was the right place for us.

We continue to have full faith in the Medical and Nursing Team of Alta Bates NICU. We know we are in excellent hands with Dr Espinoza and his team, as well as Alison Brooks and the excellent nursing team.

Given Covid-19, there have been challenges for all that we recognize (I have been involved in the State's Covid-19 response having previously led a Macquarie Home Healthcare Director Taskforce and advised the British Prime Minister on the UK's NHS strategy). We do recognize the extremely challenging, dynamic and unique environment we are operating in – further complicated with the events of the past few weeks with George Floyd's tragic death protests and rumors about Alta Bates hospital creating an uncertain lockdown situation.

However, policies that are being set by Sutter Health centrally (SHAMS) is leading to unintended consequences that we wish to rapidly bring to your attention, and explore what can be done to improve health outcomes for all. We are particularly stippled by the policies given Sutter Health is positioned as 'Family Friendly', and these policies are increasing concern and visitor risk.

First, we want to agree there are three principles we are seeking for:

1. Safe Covid-19 protocols for hospital staff, vulnerable NICU patients, parents

We are absolutely clear that we do not wish to compromise the safety of our children, parents or hospital staff during this period, and I've been involved in the setting of some of these policies at the State level and on advisory committees to other countries.

**5TH JUNE 2020**

THIS LETTER WAS SENT TO THE HEAD OF THE NICU, DR ESPINOZA, AND THE HEAD OF THE HOSPITAL. THEY WERE VERY UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT BABIES CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS WANTED BUT SAID THAT SOMETIMES IN NATIONAL EMERGENCIES LIKE COVID-19, RULES ARE MADE BEYOND THE CONTROL OF HOSPITALS.

WHO WRITES THE RULES? ASKED CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS.

“THESE RULES ARE SET BY THE GOVERNMENT,” HE REPLIED.

SO THIS MEANT THAT CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS WOULD HAVE TO CHANGE GOVERNMENT RULES TO ALLOW BOTH PARENTS TO VISIT THEIR CHILDREN TOGETHER.

“HOW DO YOU DO THAT?” THEY WONDERED, AS THERE WAS NOT A GUIDEBOOK ON HOW TO CHANGE GOVERNMENT RULES...



THE STATE CAPITOL IN SACRAMENTO, WHERE CALIFORNIA'S GOVERNMENT SITS

IT TURNS OUT THAT TO CHANGE A RULE IN GOVERNMENT – WHICH IS KNOWN AS A POLICY – IS NOT EASY.

IT REQUIRES A LOT OF EXPERTS WITH DIFFERENT EXPERTISE TO REVIEW THE POLICY, THE PUBLIC TO EXPRESS HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT THE POLICY, AND FOR THE ELECTED GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL TO MAKE THE FINAL DECISION.

IN THE CASE OF CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS, ALTA BATES HOSPITAL IS IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA. SO IT WAS THE GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA WHO HAD THE FINAL DECISION, GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM. HE WAS A VERY BUSY PERSON.

TO REACH GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM, CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS HAD TO THINK CREATIVELY. THEY PUT THEIR HEADS TOGETHER AND CAME UP WITH A THREE-PART STRATEGY. THEN THEY GOT THEIR PARENTS TO ACT ON IT.



CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR  
GAVIN NEWSOM

# THE STRATEGY

# 1

FIRST, THEY CREATED A PETITION...

change.org

After a video surfaced of George Floyd being murdered by Minneapolis police, 15-year-old Kellen started a petition demanding justice. It's now the biggest petition ever on Change.org and officers have been arrested and charged. But we haven't yet seen justice. You can sign the petition here to send a message that Black lives matter.

### NICU Babies Need Both Their Parents

1,954 have signed. Let's get to 2,500!

Merika Challenger signed this petition.

David Haven signed this petition.

By signing you accept Change.org's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy and agree to receive occasional email about campaigns on Change.org. You can unsubscribe at any time.

Display my name and comment on this petition

Sign this petition

No parent has the NICU in their birth plan. We certainly didn't, but we ended up spending weeks in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of our hospital after our baby was born via an unexpected urgent c-section in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

The doctor and nurses at our hospital saved our baby's life, and we are so grateful to them. But

A PETITION IS A WAY FOR CITIZENS TO EXPRESS HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT A PARTICULAR ISSUE. ALMOST 2000 PEOPLE SIGNED THE PETITION, WITH MANY WRITING IN THE REASONS WHY THIS PETITION MADE SENSE TO THEM.

# 2

...SECOND, THEY CONTACTED SEVERAL NON GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS, CALLED NGOs...

NEC SOCIETY

Building a World Without NEC

NEC Society Receives \$450,000 Award from Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

Rare As One

WHAT WE DO

WHO WE ARE

CONTRIBUTE

NEC (neonatal intensive care) is a leading cause of infant death impacting three-in-ten babies every year. It is a devastating medical disease that primarily

The NEC Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to building a world without neonatal intensive care (NICU) through research, advocacy and

We need YOU to help us build a world without neonatal intensive care! Together we can drive research, raise awareness, and improve outcomes for our

THESE ARE ORGANIZATIONS THAT WORK TO IMPROVE THE WORLD, BUT ARE INDEPENDENT OF GOVERNMENTS AND PRIVATE COMPANIES. THESE NGOs OFTEN HAVE MANY EXPERTS ADVISING THEM.

# 3

...THIRD, THE BABIES ENSURED THAT NEWS ORGANIZATIONS WERE AWARE OF THE SITUATION IN NICUS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Forbes

CORONAVIRUS DISPATCHES | 1,991 views | Jun 13, 2020, 01:21pm EDT

## What It's Like Having A Child In The NICU During Covid-19

Nishan Degnarain Contributor @ Manufacturing

I cover innovation within the green/blue industrial revolution.

A neonatal nurse carries a premature baby boy to his mother in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at... [+]

GETTY IMAGES

JOURNALISTS REPORTING THE NEWS ARE IMPORTANT WAYS FOR CITIZENS TO FIND OUT INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING.

THESE JOURNALISTS HAD STARTED TO REALIZE THAT THE POLICY IN CALIFORNIA, WAS SIMILAR TO THE POLICY IN NEW YORK AND OTHER STATES, AND THAT MANY OTHER BABIES AND FAMILIES WERE BEING IMPACTED.

WITH THEIR STRATEGY MADE UP OF THE THREE ACTIONS:

1. A PETITION TO SHOW PUBLIC SUPPORT,
  2. NGOs TO SHOW EXPERT ADVICE,
  3. AND JOURNALISTS TO TELL ALL SIDES OF THE STORY,
- CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS ASKED GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM TO LOOK AT THESE RULES AGAIN.

GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM RECOGNIZED THAT SOME OF THE RULES MADE SENSE, SUCH AS FACE MASKS AND WASHING HANDS. AND HE ALSO REALIZED THAT THERE ARE TIMES WHEN RULES HAVE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES. LIKE ANY GOOD LEADER, HE WAS PREPARED TO LOOK AGAIN AT THESE RULES.



SO THEN A DEBATE RAGED OVER WHAT RULES MADE SENSE TO PROTECT EVERYONE FROM THE DEADLY CORONAVIRUS. THERE WERE A LOT OF OPINIONS THAT NEEDED TO BE LISTENED TO. JUST AS WELL CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS WORKED TOGETHER AS A TEAM AND HAD LOTS OF LONGSTANDING FRIENDS WHO SUPPORTED THEM.

**NEC SOCIETY**  
Building a World Without NICU

How the Pandemic Aggravates NICU Life

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Recent Posts

From a NICU Mother to a NICU Nurse

Necessity Welcomes Unwilling Guests to Board of Directors

Check out the Necessity's Inclusivity Statement

change.org

After a video surfaced of George Floyd being murdered by Minneapolis police, 15-year-old Kellan started a petition demanding justice. It's now the biggest petition ever on Change.org and officers have been arrested and charged. BUT we haven't yet seen justice. You can sign the petition here to send a message that Black lives matter.

**Let both parents of NICU babies remain with them!**

**Victory**  
This petition made change with 1006 supporters!

University of Utah Let both parents stay with their babies

Share on Facebook

Send a Facebook message

Send an email to friends

Tweet to your followers

Copy link

Sarah Schaeffer started this petition to Universal Health. Please sign this petition on behalf of one of my dearest friends Helen, her husband Brian, and her NICU preemie Lucy Catherine.

Lucy Catherine Haversaat was born at 8:23pm on May 1st, via c-section, after her mom's water broke three months early. They were very lucky and were able to give her two doses of steroids

change.org

After a video surfaced of George Floyd being murdered by Minneapolis police, 15-year-old Kellan started a petition demanding justice. It's now the biggest petition ever on Change.org and officers have been arrested and charged. BUT we haven't yet seen justice. You can sign the petition here to send a message that Black lives matter.

**NICU babies NEED their parents**

47 have signed. Let's get to 100!

Display \$1000 United States

Display my name and comment on this petition

Sign this petition

Hi all, I am not one to post, but given the current climate we live in, and after reading something that has touched close to home I feel I need to say something. I am thrilled to see that hospitals are overturning the decision to not allow partners during labor and delivery. However, I am seeing the unthinkable, that one of the largest delivery

change.org

NICU Babies Need Both Their Parents

Twins in the NICU

1,960 have signed. Let's get to 2,500!

Nishan and Vinaya Degnarain United States

Display my name and comment on this petition

Sign this petition

By signing you accept Change.org's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy and agree to receive occasional email about campaigns on Change.org. You can unsubscribe at any time.

JUN 12, 2020 —

We are deeply touched and moved by all of you who have signed and reached out with words of support. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts! On the personal side, our baby has been making great progress, and we are optimistic for a positive outcome and discharge soon. We are also immensely grateful for the incredible medical and nursing team in the NICU and the excellent and loving care they provide

change.org

Reasons for signing

April Enayem 1 month ago

I just went through this for 19 days, recovering from a C-section, having my child in NICU, and not being able to lean on my support while trying to bond with my child.

1 - Report

Ludmila Lokova 1 month ago

It is so difficult already, every day is full of fears and emotions. Please, let parents lean on to each other and be there for their little hero who is fighting so hard every single moment!

0 - Report

Jen Skutki 1 month ago

I am including an excerpt of the email I sent to Governor Newsom (you can contact his office via https://govapps.gov.ca.gov/gov/omail/ or by phone (916) 445-2841)

Read more

2 - Report

change.org

NICU Babies Need Both Their Parents

California Dept of Public Health updates NICU Visitation Guidance

1,944 have signed. Let's get to 2,500!

Nishan and Vinaya Degnarain United States

Display my name and comment on this petition

Sign this petition

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JUN 24, 2020 —

Hi all — another positive update!

We are thrilled to see that the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) updated its NICU Visitation Guidance last week!

change.org

NICU Babies Need Both Their Parents

Great news - hospital NICU policy changing!!

1,945 have signed. Let's get to 2,500!

Nishan and Vinaya Degnarain United States

Display my name and comment on this petition

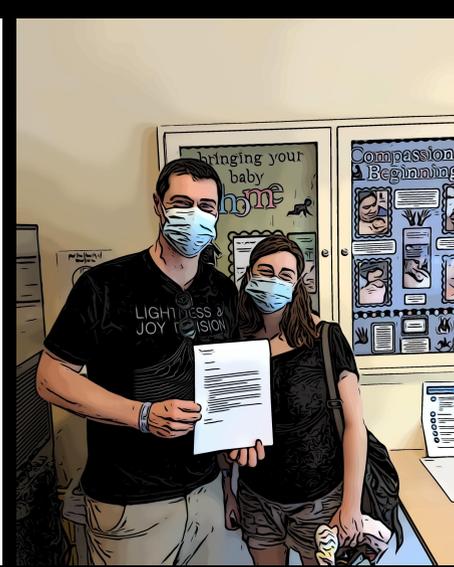
Sign this petition

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JUN 20, 2020 —

Hi all — We want to thank you all for your support. It has meant so much to the both of us, and we are truly touched by the support we've received. We wanted to share some positive updates:

First, our hospital system heard the petition and this week announced they were revising their



PETITION UPDATE

California Dept of Public Health updates NICU Visitation Guidance

Nishan and Vinaya Degnarain United States

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
California Department of Public Health

June 18, 2020

To: All Health

Subject: Visitor Visitation Guidance (NICU Updates) (AF20001)

All Health Letter (AF2) Summary

The AF2 outlines all facilities and updated guidance for public health, patients in labor and delivery, and patients at end of life and patients with high intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and patients with neurocognitive disabilities.

The AF2 clarifies that health facilities may require a sign-in process to accompany a patient for whom a sign-in process has been determined to be essential for the care of the patient (monthly necessary), including a patient with high intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and patients with neurocognitive disabilities.

The AF2 has been updated to include updated guidance for neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and pediatric intensive care unit (PICU).

ALTA BATES HOSPITAL HEARD THAT GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM WAS LOOKING AT THE POLICY AGAIN. SO THEY DECIDED TO LOOK AT THEIR RULES TO SEE WHICH ONES MADE SENSE.

THEY AGREED THAT WASHING HANDS AND WEARING FACE MASKS WERE IMPORTANT. THEY ALSO SAW THE NEED FOR NEW RULES, SUCH AS MAKING SURE THERE IS A SAFE DISTANCE WHILST IN THE WAITING ROOMS.



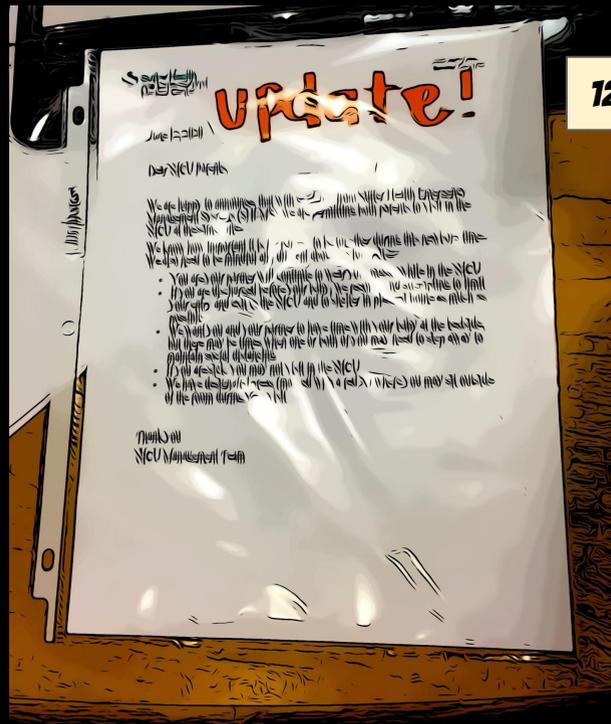
ON WHETHER BOTH PARENTS COULD VISIT THEIR CHILDREN AT THE SAME TIME, THEY AGREED WITH CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR FAMILIES TO BE KEPT TOGETHER – LIKE A SPORTS TEAM.

THE HOSPITAL'S EMERGENCY COMMITTEE HAD TO HAVE AN OFFICIAL MEETING TO DECIDE WHETHER TO UPDATE THEIR VISITATION POLICY.

**VICTORY AT  
ALTA BATES HOSPITAL**

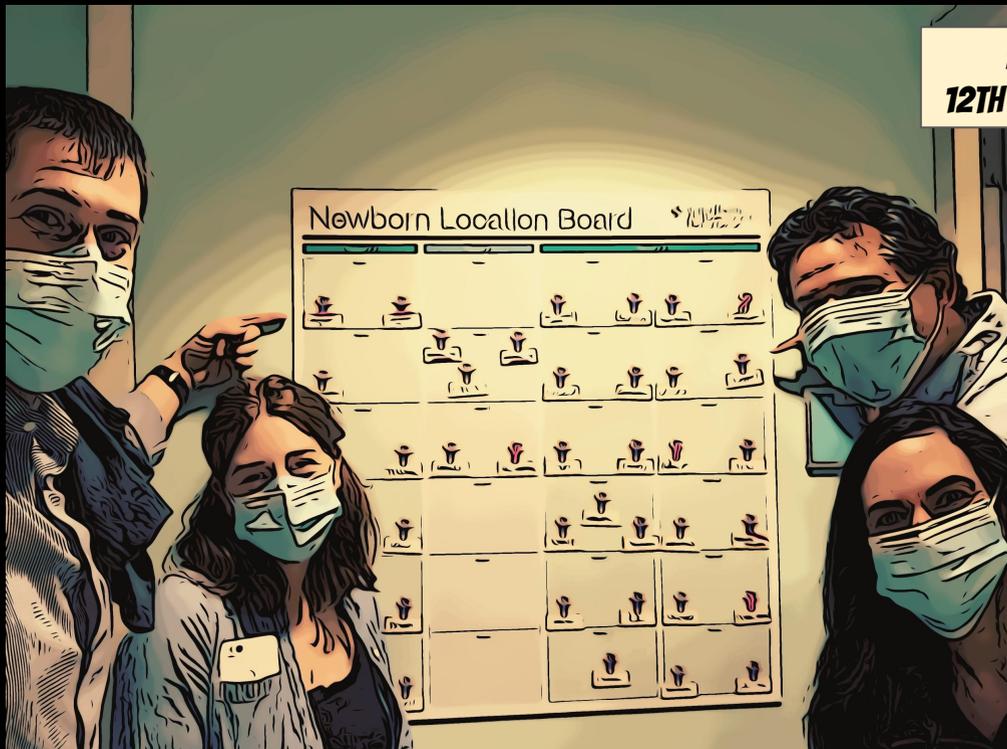


THAT VERY AFTERNOON THE HOSPITAL ISSUED AN OFFICIAL UPDATE TO THE VISITATION POLICY FOR ALTA BATES' HOSPITAL NICU.



12TH JUNE 2020

THE PARENTS OF CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS WERE VERY EXCITED TO BE ABLE TO ALL GO IN TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME.



FRIDAY  
12TH JUNE 2020

ALL THE FAMILIES COULD FINALLY BE UNITED!



12TH JUNE 2020



25TH JULY 2020

THE FOLLOWING WEEK, THE GOVERNOR OF CALIFORNIA, GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM, ISSUED A CHANGE IN POLICY FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA. HE HAD LISTENED TO ALL THE ARGUMENTS PRESENTED BY CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS, AND ANNOUNCED THAT FOR ALL HOSPITALS ACROSS THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, BABIES AND PARENTS COULD VISIT TOGETHER.



SONIA Y. ANGELL, MD, MPH  
State Public Health Officer & Director

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
**California Department of Public Health**



GAVIN NEWSOM  
Governor

AFL 20-38.2

June 16, 2020

TO: All Facilities

SUBJECT: Visitor Limitations Guidance  
(This AFL supersedes AFL 20-38.1)

All Facilities Letter (AFL) Summary

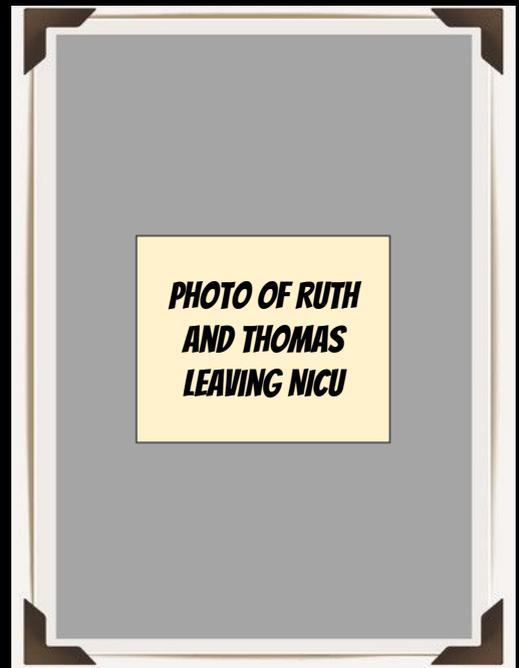
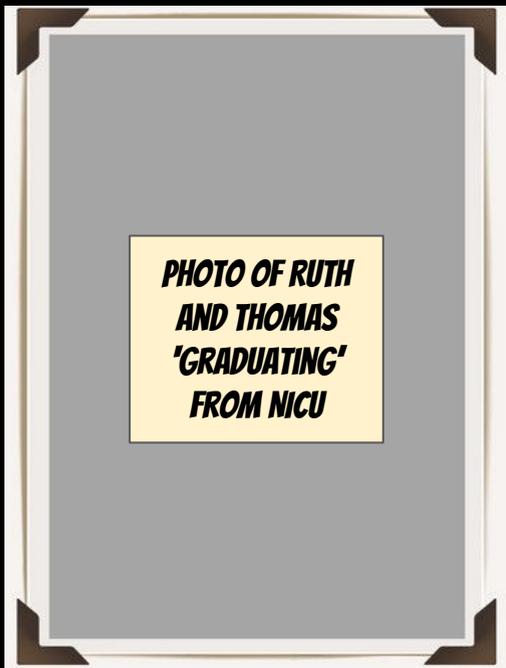
- This AFL notifies all facilities of updated visitor guidelines for pediatric patients, patients in labor and delivery, and patients at end-of-life and patients with physical, intellectual, and/or developmental disabilities and patients with cognitive impairments.
- This AFL clarifies that health facilities may permit a support person to accompany a patient for whom a support person has been determined to be essential to the care of the patient (medically necessary), including patients with physical, intellectual, and/or developmental disabilities and patients with cognitive impairments.
- This AFL has been updated to include updated guidance for neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and pediatric intensive care unit patients (PICU).

**TUESDAY  
16TH JUNE 2020**



BABIES CAYDEN, RUTH AND THOMAS WERE VERY HAPPY TO HEAR THIS, AND KNOW THEY HAD PLAYED THEIR SMALL ROLE IN MAKING SURE BABIES AND PARENTS ACROSS CALIFORNIA WOULD ALL BE HAPPY TOGETHER, AS THEY STARTED OUT ON THEIR JOURNEYS AS NEW FAMILIES. THIS POLICY WAS THEN ROLLED OUT ACROSS CALIFORNIA'S HOSPITALS TO ALL THE CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENTS.

SOON, BABY CAYDEN WOULD GRADUATE FROM THE NICU, AND HE LOOKED FORWARD TO WELCOMING HIS NEW FRIENDS, THE TWINS RUTH AND THOMAS, TO JOIN HIM IN THIS WONDERFUL WORLD!



**THE END**