

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **New Emergency Department Safety Screening Protocols - What Patients Need to Know**

Gardner MA - Due to a growing trend of violence in our Emergency Departments, and emergency departments across the Country, Heywood Healthcare is instituting immediate safety protocols to include full enforcement of a Zero Tolerance policy of weapons of any kind.

Patients should expect the following Safety Protocols:

- All Patients entering the Emergency Departments will be Screened via a security wand
- Patients entering the ED Treatment area will be provided a gown and personal items will be placed in a safe place
- Temporarily Visitation is Suspended in the Emergency Department (exceptions include caregivers, parents of minors, healthcare proxies, also subject to screening)  
Restricted Visitation will continue until more permanent safety infrastructure is in place.

Over the past three years, we have seen an increase in violence in our Emergency Departments, including verbal and physical abuse. “We are committed to ensuring the safety of our workforce and the safety of all patients seeking care.” - Dr. Ellen Ray, Medical Director of Emergency Medicine, Heywood Hospital.

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## About Heywood Healthcare

Heywood Healthcare is an independent community healthcare system serving north central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. It is comprised of Heywood Hospital, a 134-bed acute care community-owned non-profit hospital in Gardner, MA; Athol Hospital, a 25-bed not-for-profit, Critical Access Hospital in Athol, MA; Heywood Medical Group, with primary care physicians and specialists located throughout the region; and The Quabbin Retreat, a premier destination for addiction treatment and mental health. Heywood Medical Group includes multiple satellite facilities throughout the region: Ashburnham Family Medicine, Heywood Rehabilitation Center, Summit Family Medicine, Main Street Primary Care & Heywood Urgent Care in Gardner, the Winchendon Health Center & Murdock School-based Health Center in Winchendon, Athol Primary Care, Tully Family Medicine and Walk-In Care in Athol, and ACES School Based Health Center, in Athol. For more information, visit [www.heywood.org](http://www.heywood.org).