



THE NEW AMERICAN FAMILY IS WHAT YOU DECIDE IT IS

Question: I went to visit my ex-husband in the hospital but the unit had a sign that read "Family Only," Did that mean me? We aren't married, nor are we blood relatives.

Answer: It's heart-warming that you and your ex-husband are still friendly. Many couples are in a similar situation. As AARP pointed out in "The New American Family," families are changing and the concepts of blood and marriage are no longer the rule. Blended families, adoptive families, and close friends can all be considered family.

Family means different things to different people in the healthcare setting. For example, what are the roles and the expectations? Hospital and convalescent center staff often look to "family" to help with medical decision-making, discharge planning, and information on financial arrangements. As far as visiting, family is who the patient says it is.

FEDERAL LAW: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services enacted a rule that all hospitals and care facilities that accept Medicare or Medicaid must allow the patient to determine who may and may not visit. This can be blood relatives, same-sex partners, ex-spouses, even close friends. Establishing

one's own list of visitors is a patient right.

STATE LAW: If you are a patient and unable to speak or make decisions, your healthcare agent can usually decide on visitors on your behalf. For that reason, choose a healthcare agent carefully or better yet, include a list of preferred visitors in your healthcare directive. Healthcare directives are a matter of state law and can be checked by contacting your state attorney general's office.

HOSPITAL POLICY: Hospitals are required to advise you of your rights upon admission. And in order to protect other patients' privacy and enable staff to do their jobs, hospitals also have visiting policies. Their policy cannot conflict with federal law, but the policy may place restrictions on the number of visitors or visiting hours.

Hospital staff doesn't know who family is and who isn't. Friends and family should remain calm and cooperative and always work together in the best interest of the patient.

Sources: "The New American Family," Brennen Jensen, *AARP The Magazine*, June/July 2014. "New Rules Require Equal Visitation Rights for All Patients," Brian Bond, www.whitehouse.gov/blog, 11/17/10.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

**Did you hear about the restaurant on the moon?
The food is terrific, but there's no atmosphere.**

—*A Prairie Home Companion Pretty Good Joke Book*

Laughter is known to boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, burn calories and release pleasure-inducing chemicals in the brain.

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PRESERVING FAMILY PHOTOS



The end of summer used to mean a shoebox full of vacation photos documenting family trips, beach days and July 4th parades, followed by school pictures and cold days inside sorting through them

all. Now, with camera phones and digital photography we don't collect or review family photos the same way. What to do with all the pictorial memories?

OLD PRINTS: There are service companies that will restore old prints for a fee. You can also learn to do it yourself with a scanner and Photoshop. Whether you pay a pro or try it yourself, you may have to experiment or guess at the colors in old prints. It is remarkable how the faded faces of family members can be preserved for future generations this way. Some specialty labs in larger cities and through mail order can still print from film negatives, but some labs will not accept liability for mishandling or ruining very old film.

Sources: <http://www.archives.gov/preservation/family-archives>. "Restore Old Photos: How to Rescue Vintage Prints and Restore Family Photos," J. Meyer, <http://www.digitalcameraworld.com/2013/01/18/restore-old-photos-how-to-rescue-vintage-prints-and-family-pictures>.

NEW PRINTS: Laser printers and photo quality paper have made printing photos at home a favorite way to share and save family pictures. You can even print from your camera phone! But remember, these prints are not professional quality and may fade in the sun and over time. If you want to print high quality images that will last, consider investing in a photo printer.

DIGITAL ARCHIVING: Almost all photo labs now offer a digital copy of your pictures, even those old prints you bring in for restoration. You may purchase a CD or have images emailed, or uploaded to a cloud for safekeeping. Walgreen's and Costco, for example, are brick-and-mortar stores where you can get photo lab staff to walk you through your options. Online services, like Shutterfly and Snapfish are fully digital options where you can upload, share and download to exchange and archive family photos.

The bottom line is that you have more options now than ever before, so hit the beach, the pool or the picnic and snap those smiles!

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE MPPAF'S NATIONAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Federal Trade Commission Consumer Help (Consumer Resources), www.consumer.ftc.gov

The Federal Trade Commission is the nation's consumer protection agency that works to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the U.S. marketplace. Good information can be found here on budgeting, home loans, and protecting your identity.

AARP Nurse Healthline (Health Services), (888) 543-5630

For AARP United Healthcare Insurance members nurses are available 24/7 to explore treatment options, discuss health conditions, and review test results.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“People's minds are changed through observation and not through argument.”

—Will Rogers

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