

SUBJECT: SERVICE ANIMALS
APPLIES TO: Patients and Visitors
AUTHORIZED BY: Senior Management Team
CATEGORY: Policy and Procedure

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Policy

SAH will accommodate persons with disabilities partnered with a service animal. Ontario Regulation 429/07 and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 mandates that service animals be allowed access to places of public accommodation. Service animals are not pets but animals trained to provide assistance to a person with a given disability.

When a service animal accompanies a worker, patient or visitor, the animal is granted access into all public areas of the hospital permitted to others, except those areas that require special precautions. Service animals are not permitted in the following restricted areas:

- all operating rooms;
- pharmacy and medication preparation and storage areas;
- all sterile storage areas;
- Neonatal Intensive Care Unit;
- rooms with radiation exposure (X-ray, CT, radiation bunker, etc.); and
- food preparation areas

Emotional Support Animals

Emotional support animals provide comfort and security; however, they do not have training for specific tasks. Therefore, emotional support animals do not formally qualify as service animals under the AODA.

At SAH, an Emotional Support Animal will be considered a “service animal” if the patient/visitor provides documentation from a regulated health professional confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability (Point 3 under Identification below) and at the discretion of the area manager or delegate based on a risk analysis.

Identification

There are three ways to identify a service animal. Only one of the following would be required to allow a service animal access.

1. A worker has identified the need for a service animal for themselves to Human Resources.
2. It is visibly apparent that the patient or visitor requires the animal for reasons relating to disability; or
3. Under Ontario provincial law as set out in the AODA, a person “provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that they require the animal for reasons relating to the disability”:
 - A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.
 - A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.
 - A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.
 - A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.
 - A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario.

- A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.
- A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.

The letter need **only** explain that the animal is required because of a disability; the letter does **not** need to identify the disability, why the animal is needed, or how it is used.

If needed, confirmation that the patient or visitor is in possession of a letter should be verified by the supervisor/manager or delegate of the area the patient/visitor is trying to access with the service animal. Where the reasons for the use of the service animal are not visible and apparent, and the individual does not have a letter on their person, an opportunity to access that letter should be provided. There is not a standardized format for these letters and they may differ for each healthcare practitioner. Managers will have to use their best judgement on a case-by-case basis, erring on the side of compassion.

Service animal owners may need to be reminded that all service animals are required to meet the following guidelines;

- Free of hook worm, fleas, diarrhea and skin lesions
- Vaccinated against rabies (proof of vaccination required)
- Clean and well-groomed
- House trained
- Obedient/good tempered
- Leashed/harnessed/contained as required

The service animal must not be prevented from performing its function (ex. if the service animal must retrieve objects as part of its role then the animal cannot be muzzled or contained).

DEFINITIONS:

Service Animal: Any animal individually trained to assist people with disabilities in the activities of normal daily living, to enhance quality of life, and mitigate their disabilities. These animals provide persons living with disabilities a variety of services, including but not limited to:

- guiding individuals with visual impairments
- alerting individuals who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing to sounds
- alerting to seizures
- opening/closing doors
- retrieving items
- pulling a wheelchair

Most service animals are dogs and can be of any breed or size. A service animal is afforded access to all places the public is invited when accompanying their human partner. A service animal is not considered a “pet” because it is specially trained to help a person overcome the limitations of their disability or used to minimize the impacts of the disability.

Areas of Public Accommodation: An area of public accommodation is defined as any area within the building that is open to the public or third parties. This includes patient rooms, waiting rooms, patient/family rooms, elevators, stairwells, examination rooms, hallways, external grounds, coffee shops, and cafeterias.

PROCEDURE

1. SAH will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate patients, visitors or workers that require use of a service animal.

2. Where the owner provides advance notice of the use of a service animal while attending or during admittance to hospital, SAH will arrange for pre-planning and documentation with the owner through the appropriate admitting area (ex. Pre-Admission Unit, admitting physician/clinic, etc.).
3. The owner must ensure the service animal remains in the owner's care and control at all times while in hospital (ex. service animals must be leashed, unless otherwise agreed to with the Hospital in extenuating circumstances or is required to be unleashed in order to perform its duties).
4. Service animals will be allowed in areas of public accommodation; however, will refrain from entering restricted areas.
5. Should a service animal require entry to a restricted area (ex. spouse or family member of admitted patient in the OR requires use of Guide Dog for visual impairment) the Manager of the area will consult with IPAC to assess risk for entry.
6. Generally, SAH workers will not touch, pet, speak to, distract, or take an action that might startle a service animal unless required as part of the care of the patient. In the event that interaction with the animal is required for the purposes of care, communication or therapeutic alliance, the SAH worker should first get consent and guidance from the owner.
7. Patients who are accompanied by a service animal and are requiring an in-patient admission should be considered for private accommodation. If a roommate is required they should be chosen carefully (ex. not immunocompromised, allergic, confused or afraid of animals).
8. Workers assigned to work with patients accompanied by a service animal should be chosen with consideration carefully (ex. allergic or afraid of animals).
9. All workers are accountable to review and understand the Service Animal Policy.
10. Patients requiring a service animal during a hospital admission are to be provided with the following information either during the pre-admission process or otherwise at the earliest opportunity:
 - The care and supervision of the service animal is the responsibility of the individual who uses the service animal's service.
 - The individual must maintain control of the service animal at all times and is responsible for the care, feeding of the animal and clean-up of waste.
 - If the owner of the service animal cannot take the animal outside for elimination purposes, a family member, friend or other person identified by the service animal owner will be necessary to be scheduled to assist with the feeding and elimination needs of the service animal.
 - If the owner of the service animal cannot identify an alternate person to assist with the feeding and elimination needs, the service animal cannot remain on the unit.
 - SAH workers should work with the individual who uses the service animal's service to provide all reasonable opportunity to allow them to try and find a caregiver for the animal (ex. providing access to phones, emails in order to contact an alternate caregiver for the animal.)
 - Elimination needs are to take place outside of the health care facility and are **not** the responsibility of the health care staff. Hospital courtyards are not to be used for elimination purposes.
 - Any waste is to be disposed of appropriately into a plastic bag and placed in an outside garbage receptacle.
 - Hand hygiene is to be performed after attending to feeding and elimination needs.
 - The service animal is not permitted in other in-patient rooms without that patient's consent.

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- If the service animal is in stage of reproductive cycle/ heat cycle, the owner will be responsible to provide and apply appropriate animal protection garments.
11. The Infection, Prevention and Control (IPAC) Department will be advised of admission.
 12. Service Animal Notification signs will be placed outside patient room upon admission to identify/alert that service animal is present in room (see Appendix A).
 13. The owner of the service animal will provide SAH (ex. Clinical Manager/Supervisor or Delegate) with proof of vaccination and the name and contact information for a designated person who will assume responsibility to provide care for the animal in the event that the owner must be separated from their service animal, if requested.
 14. Workers are not to separate or attempt to separate a service animal from the individual in the absence of obtaining informed consent. Clear instructions shall be entered on the patient's medical chart.
 15. In accordance with this policy, if it becomes necessary to separate the service animal from its owner, healthcare personnel will make all reasonable efforts to work with the owner to help facilitate the transfer of the animal to a designated person.
 16. If the service animal displays any documented aggressive or disruptive behavior (ex. excessive growling or barking) which is outside of the duties of the service animal, SAH has the discretion to balance patient/worker safety with accommodation. If the service animal has to be removed, the service animal may be removed and transferred to an animal caregiver of the owner's choice. If they do not have a designated caregiver for the animal, the owner should be provided the opportunity and support to find alternate accommodations, potentially including private animal care providers, foster agencies like TAGG or Northern Critters in Need, or the Sault Ste. Marie Humane Society to potentially hold the animal until the patient is released from care.
 17. If any worker, visitor, or patient sustains an injury from a service animal, the appropriate incident report will be completed in compliance with reporting procedures.
 18. If a worker feels threatened by the service animal's behaviour or the type of animal the individual has presented with, the immediate Manager/Director on call or delegate is to be contacted for guidance and direction.
 19. All in-patient complaints relating to a service animal shall be forwarded to the Supervisor and/or Manager of the area or delegate as a first step to resolution. If resolution is not achieved at the unit/department level, the complaint will be forwarded to the Patient Relations Department for continued follow-up as per the policy entitled "*Patient and Visitor Concerns Management Policy*" (Administrative Policy 2.6)
 20. Concerns about animal distress or abuse can be reported to the Ontario Animal Protection Call Centre at 1-833-9-ANIMAL (264625).

RELATED RESOURCES

Infection Control Clinical Policy IV- 20 Animals in the Hospital
Infection Control Clinical Policy IV- 20A Pet Visitation Contract
Accessibility Administrative Policy 1.1

REVIEW HISTORY- Created: June 2020

APPENDIX A – Animal Notification Sign

ATTENTION



Service Animal
Present in Room