


Service Animals Policy and Procedure			
 Halton Healthcare <small>GEORGETOWN • MILTON • OAKVILLE</small>	Program/Dept:	Quality & Patient Relations	Document Category: Quality & Patient Relations
	Developed by:	Health Equity Committee	Original Approval Date: December 10, 2009
	Approved by:	Quality Council	Reviewed Date: October 2012, March 2018
	Review Frequency:	3 years	Revised Date: September 2021

Preamble

Service Animals are not pets. They are animals trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability. They are individually trained to assist people with disabilities in the activities of normal daily living, to enhance quality of life and mitigate their disabilities. They provide a variety of services, including but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision; alerting individuals who are hearing impaired to intruders or sounds; providing companionship; pulling a wheelchair; alerting to seizures; opening/closing doors, or retrieving dropped items. A service animal is afforded access to all places the public is invited when accompanying their human partner, with respect to Infection Control guidelines.

Don't make assumptions. If you cannot easily identify that the animal is a service animal, you can ask the person to provide documentation (e.g. template, letter, form) from a regulated health professional. The documentation must confirm that the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

Note: You cannot ask the person about the disability for which the service animal is needed, but you can ask if there is anything about their disability that we should know to assist us in providing their care.

There are no restrictions on what type of animal can be used as a service animal. An animal is considered a service animal if:

- it wears a harness, vest or other visual indicator
- the person with a disability provides [documentation from a regulated health professional](#)

Policy

Halton Healthcare is committed to fostering an atmosphere which removes and prevents barriers that impact the accessibility of people with disabilities. This includes patients, families, staff, physicians, and volunteers. Halton Healthcare acknowledges the vital relationship and dependency which exists between a person with disabilities and their service animal. Halton Healthcare staff/physicians and volunteers will ensure that they make all reasonable efforts to accommodate persons with disabilities and their service animals.

Procedure

Inpatients/Outpatients/Visitors

1. Patients with disabilities are requested to inform hospital staff as early in the pre-admit process as possible of the need for their service animal to stay with them in hospital.
2. In planning for a hospital admission/visit, staff must consider the following:
 - The wellbeing of the patient.
 - The wellbeing of the service animal.
 - The patient's and service animal's previous experience with hospitals.
 - The anticipated length of stay.

Service Animals Policy and Procedure

- Implications for patients sharing space in the vicinity.
 - Implications for staff/physicians/volunteers.
3. The requirements surrounding the admission/visit of a patient with a service animal will be assessed individually. The service animal will be allowed to remain with the patient provided the following provisions have been made:
- There are no Infection Prevention & Control reasons that would preclude the service animal's presence.
 - Ideally the patient will be placed in a private room. If there is no private room available, nursing staff must ensure that there are no circumstances that would adversely influence the wellbeing of the patient's roommates (for example allergies, fear of dogs, or some other unacceptable level of risk).
 - The patient should assume full responsibility for the care and behaviour of the service animal at all times. The patient may delegate this responsibility to family or friends if necessary.
 - Service animals are not permitted to accompany a patient into the Operating Room or Post Anaesthetic Care Unit. At the discretion of the Patient Care Manager and attending physician, service animals may be permitted a short visit to their owner in an Intensive Care Unit.
 - If the patient requests their service animal remain with them overnight, a family member/friend, who the service animal knows well, must remain overnight and assume full responsibility for the service animal on behalf of the patient.
 - At no time will hospital staff assume responsibility for meeting the service animal's needs for exercise, nutrition, elimination, etc.
 - Nursing staff are required to notify support departments (e.g. Patient Transport, Diagnostic Imaging) in advance when a patient will be accompanied by a service animal.
 - Pending consultation with and on the approval of IP&C, service animals of visitors will be allowed entry to an isolation room

Roles/Responsibilities

a) Owner

- The service animal's owner is responsible for its control and stewardship i.e. the animal's behaviour, care (including feeding and toileting), supervision and wellbeing;
- The owner is responsible for making available training school and up to date immunization records if requested.
- The service animal should be clearly identified/recognized (e.g. identification card, harness or jacket with markings of the training school). If in doubt, consult with Patient Relations.

b) Area Charge Person

- Inform staff about the role of the service animal and how to interact appropriately with the patient and the animal;
- Notify other patients of the service animal's presence and address any concerns (e.g. allergies);
- Discuss with owner and staff the responsibilities for feeding, handling and cleaning issues;
- If a Health Care Provider does not feel comfortable providing care to a patient with a service animal, the Health Care Provider is responsible to find an alternate professional who will provide that care and document this in the patient's health record.

c) Staff (including Physicians)

- Are not to separate or attempt to separate a patient from their service animal

Service Animals Policy and Procedure

without the owner's consent;

- Are not to touch a service animal or the person it assists, without permission;
- Are not to pet or make noise at a service animal as this may distract the animal from the task at hand;
- Are not to feed a service animal as it may have specific dietary requirements or may become ill from unusual food or food at an unexpected time;
- Are not to deliberately startle a service animal;
- Are not to provide care for the service animal while performing their professional health related responsibilities. This care includes, but is not limited to feeding, toileting, exercising and interacting.

Safety

If any staff, visitor, or patient sustains an injury from a service animal, an incident report must be completed detailing the name of the injured, circumstances, and nature of injury. All bites should be reported to Halton Regional Public Health's Health line at 311. The owner will be asked to provide current vaccination records for the service animal.

Eviction or Exclusion

The patient or visitor will be advised why the animal is excluded and see what other arrangements can be made to provide them with healthcare or services. If the person with the service animal agrees, this might mean leaving the animal in a secure area where it is permitted by law. It might also mean offering to serve the person outside or in another location where the animal is permitted. Patients on a mental health form who are unable to leave the patient care area will not be able to care for their service animals (by taking them outside for elimination), and this may require the animal to be excluded.

- Eviction or exclusion of a service animal can only occur for reasons that are demonstrable, not speculative. Assumptions or speculation about how the animal is likely to behave based on past experience with other animals are not valid. If another person complains about the presence of a service animal (because of allergies, fear, or other reasons not related to the animal's demeanor or health), the person with objections to the animal should be separated and/or remove themselves from the area where the animal is located. Each situation is to be considered individually and in consultation with the owner.
- Discussion with Patient Relations is recommended in difficult situations.
- A service animal may only be evicted, excluded or separated from its owner if the animal's actual behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others; or if contraindicated by the attending physician for sound medical and/or Infection Control reasons.
- If a service animal is excluded by law from the premises, Halton Healthcare will ensure that other measures are available to enable the person with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from our services. Patient Relations may be contacted in order to assist in coming to a mutually agreeable solution that will allow the person with a disability to attain the desired outcome while respecting Halton Healthcare's goals related to safety and wellbeing of others. Where an animal is excluded by law from the premises, Halton Healthcare will still take steps to make sure that healthcare services can be provided to the person with a disability.
- The needs of the person with a disability must be addressed if his or her service animal is excluded. For example, a person with a vision disability might need someone to guide him or her. It is important to ensure that other measures are explored when a person's service animal is excluded.

These circumstances and rationale must be documented in the patient's health record.

Service Animals Policy and Procedure

If a patient must be separated from his or her service animal while in the health-care facility, clarify with the patient what arrangements have been made for supervision or care of the animal during this period of separation; and make appropriate arrangements to address the patient's needs in the absence of the service animal.

Key Words

animal, disability, dog, guide dog

References

Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities:
Recommendations of CDC and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee
(HICPAC) <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/guidelines/environmental-guidelines.pdf>

Guidelines for animal-assisted interventions in health care facilities
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18313508>

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004

Health Protection and Promotion Act

Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001

Reviewed by/Consultation with

Health Equity Committee
Manager, Infection Prevention and Control
Manager, Health, Safety & Wellness

Signed by _____

Title _____