

North York General Hospital Policy Manual

Service Animals

NUMBER: I - 220

CROSS REFERENCE: Pet Animal Visitation I -160
AODA –Customer Service I-225

ORIGINATOR: AODA Sub-Committee Chair
APPROVED BY: Operations Committee

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POLICY:

North York General Hospital (NYGH) recognizes the diversity of the community it serves. Service animals are permitted within NYGH in areas commonly accessed by the public. When a patient or visitor enters the hospital with a service animal, every effort will be made to accommodate and ensure that the surroundings will allow the individual to effectively maintain his/her relationship with the animal. If this is not possible due to health or safety concerns, a mutually agreed upon location for the animal may be identified for a limited time. In this instance, other provisions will be made to ensure that the individual receives the support otherwise provided by the service animal. Please see Appendix A for examples of service animals.

PROCEDURE/GUIDELINE:

I Procedure for Welcoming Service Animals and Guide Dogs:

i) Elective Patient Admissions

- The Preadmission Clinic visit allows the opportunity for the staff member and patient to plan for the patient to be accompanied by his/her service animal. The staff member will document this conversation in the patient's health record;
- The owner is responsible for pre-planning with a support person if necessary;
- All reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate the patient and service animal when no advanced notification has been received;
- For elective admissions, NYGH will, if possible, assign the patient a private room. If not, a semi-private room will be assigned with the consent of the other patient(s) (documented in the patient's chart by the staff member obtaining the consent). The service animal is to remain with the owner at all times. If the patient is unable to manage the service animal, his/her designated support person for the animal is notified to come and assume responsibility for the animal during the transition period. The service animal may be brought to the hospital to visit and to resume its duty as soon as possible.

ii) Outpatient Procedures or Clinic Appointments

- All reasonable efforts will be made to welcome a patient with a service animal
- An outpatient who knows they will be separated from his/her animal should arrange his/her own support person if possible. If he/she is unable to find someone or if the appointment is unplanned or emergent, please call the Clinical Team Manager/Manager or designate.

iii) Emergency Patient Admissions

Conscious patients able to manage the service animal will not be separated unless the owner gives consent (which will be documented in the patient's health record by the staff member) or if there are Infection Control or safety issues.

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For patients who need help with their service animals due to unforeseen circumstances, who have no support person with them:

- The Clinical Team Manager/Manager or designate will contact Security who will provide a crate and bowl for water.
- The Clinical Team Manager/Manager or designate of the area will determine who will contact the next of kin or support person to come to the hospital and assume responsibility for the animal.
- If the patient needs to be separated for a prolonged period of time and no contact person of the patient is available, Lions Foundation of Canada / Dog Guides Canada can be contacted by the Clinical Team Manager or delegate at 905-842-2891 ext 222 and they will take temporary responsibility for the animal.
- The service animal will be brought to the hospital to visit and to resume its duty as soon as possible.

II Responsibilities

i) Owner

- The service animal's owner is responsible for its control and care;
- The owner is responsible for providing name of training school and up-to-date immunization records upon request;
- The service animal should be clearly identified/recognized (e.g. identification card, harness or jacket with markings of the training school).

ii) Charge Person

- Update 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 Clinical Team Manager/Manager or designate will find an alternate professional who will provide that care and document this in the patient's health record.

iii) Staff, Physicians and Volunteers

Will not (Please see Appendix B for further details):

- separate or attempt to separate a patient from his/her service animal without the owner's consent, unless in an emergency situation. In a case where it is believed that there is a need to separate the patient from his/her service animal, the Clinical Team Manager or designate will be contacted in order that this can be done in an appropriate manner, and ensure that there is documentation in the patient's health record as to reason why the separation was made and where the service animal was placed;
- touch a service animal or the person it assists, without permission;
- pet, startle or make noise at a service animal as this may distract the animal from the task at hand;
- feed a service animal;
- 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

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interacting. **Note: If hospital employees volunteer to assist the patient to care for the service animal during their off duty hours, they do so at their own risk and liability. This excludes responsibilities that are delegated by their supervisor in emergency situations.**

III Safety

If any staff, visitor, or patient sustains an injury from a service animal, a Safety Learning Incident Process (SLIP) Form will be completed. For staff, an Occupational Health and Safety Injury report will be completed. Staff are responsible for attending Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) during business hours and the Emergency Department if OH&S is closed for appropriate assessment of any animal bites. All bites should be reported to Public Health (during business hours 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday Toronto Public Health's Health Connection line at 416-338-7600; after hours 416-690-2142.)

IV Eviction or Exclusion

- 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 demeanour or health), the person with objections to the animal should be separated and/or leave the area where the animal is located. Each situation is to be considered individually and in consultation with the owner. Discussion with Risk Management is recommended in difficult situations.
- A service animal may only be evicted, excluded or separated from its owner
 - if the animal's actual behaviour poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
 - if contraindicated by the attending physician for sound medical and/or Infection Control reasons.

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

If a patient must be separated from his or her service animal while in the health-care facility

- 1) identify from the patient what arrangements have been made for supervision or care of the animal during this period of separation; and
- 2) make appropriate arrangements to address the patient's needs in the absence of the service animal.¹

REFERENCES:

The Accessibility For Ontarians With Disabilities Act The Ontarians With Disabilities Directorate - Ontario Regulation 429/07
<http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>

¹ Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities: Recommendations of CDC and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC)
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5210a1.htm>

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Blind Persons Rights' Act - R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7, s. 1 (1).

http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90b07_e.htm

Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities:
Recommendations of CDC and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory
Committee (HICPAC) <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5210a1.htm>

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Appendix A

Examples of service animals include:

- A guide animal, trained by authorized vendors to service for mobility, individuals who are visually impaired and/or blind
- A hearing animal, trained to alert a person with significant hearing loss or who is deaf when a sound occurs, such as a knock on the door or fire alarm
- Special skills animals, trained to assist a person who has a mobility or health disability. Duties may include carrying, fetching, opening doors, ringing doorbells, activating elevator buttons, steadying a person while walking, helping a person up after a fall, emotional support, etc. Service animals sometimes are called assistance animals
- A seizure response animal, trained to assist a person with a seizure disorder. The animal's service depends on the person's needs. The animal may go for help, or may stand guard over the person during a seizure. Some animals have learned to predict a seizure and warn the person
- A companion animal or emotional support animal that assists persons with psychological disabilities. Emotional support animals can help alleviate symptoms such as depression, anxiety, stress and difficulties regarding social interactions, allowing individuals to live independently and fully use and enjoy their living environment

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Appendix B

Service Animal Awareness:

- Allow a service animal to accompany the patient at all times and everywhere on the property except where animals are specifically prohibited.
- Do not pet or touch a service animal. Petting a service animal when the animal is working distracts the animal from the task at hand.
- Do not feed a service animal. The service animal may have specific dietary requirements. Unusual food at an unexpected time may cause the animal to become ill.
- Do not deliberately startle a service animal. Do not separate or attempt to separate a patient from her or his service animal. Avoid making noises at the animal (barking, whistling, etc.)
- Converse with the owner/handler, not the animal. Avoid eye contact with the animal.
- Avoid initiating conversation about the service animal, the patient's disabilities or other service animals one has known. If you are curious you may ask if the patient/handler would like to discuss it, but be aware that many persons with disabilities do not care to share personal details.
- Remember, not all disabilities are visible. The nature of the person's disability is a private matter, and you are not entitled to inquire for details.
- Service animals may wear specialized identifiable harnesses and vests. All service animals/users have identification cards.