



TITLE: Service Animals in Health Care Facilities	POLICY NUMBER: CH-HSE-0130	PAGE #: 1 of 2
RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT: Health, Safety & Environment	POLICY LEVEL: System	EFFECTIVE DATE: 5/3/22
PREPARED BY: John Cariglio, Director, Health, Safety & Environment	APPROVED BY: Health, Safety & Environment Committee Operational Policy Council 10/29/14	
This document is not intended to create, nor is it to be construed to constitute a contract between Catholic Health (CH) and any of its Associates for either employment or the provision of any benefit. This policy supersedes any policy previous to this policy for any CH organization and any descriptions of such policies in any handbook of such organization. Personnel failing to comply with this policy may subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.		

PURPOSE:

To outline the guidelines for service animals in Health Care Facilities in manner consistent with the CH values of compassion, justice, reverence, and a commitment to excellence.

APPLIES TO:

This policy and procedure applies to acute care, primary care, and affiliated off-site locations.

POLICY:

Service animals provide a handler with disabilities an enhanced functional ability and quality of life, allowing the individual to remain integrated within their community in a dignified manner. All healthcare workers and ancillary staff must understand and respect the rights of the person with disabilities accompanied by a service animal. A service animal is defined as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. This includes, but is not limited to, guiding people with impaired vision, alerting people with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.

The ADA or New York definition does not include what some call “emotional support animals”: animals that provide a sense of safety, companionship, and comfort to those with psychiatric or emotional disabilities or conditions. Although these animals often have therapeutic benefits, they are not trained to perform specific tasks for their handlers. Under the ADA and New York law, owners of public accommodations are not required to allow emotional support animals, only service dogs (which includes psychiatric service dogs). These laws also don’t apply to regular pets.

Definitions of Service Animals:

- The U.S. Department of Justice defines any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. If the animal meets this definition, it is considered a service animal under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regardless of whether it has been licensed or certified by a state or local government.
 - **"Guide dog"** means any dog that is trained to aid a person who is blind and is actually used for such purpose, or any dog owned by a recognized guide dog training center located within the state during the period such dog is being trained or bred for such purpose.
 - **"Service dog"** means any dog that has been or is being individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, provided that the dog is or will be owned by such person or that person's parent, guardian or other legal representative.
 - **"Person with a disability"** means any person with a disability as that term is defined in subdivision twenty-one of section two hundred ninety-two of the executive law.

Identifying a Service Dog/Animal:

An associate may ask the handler if the animal is a service animal, if it is not clear. However, the owner is not required to present a license, document, or other proof that the animal is a service animal.

Service animals may include dogs of any breed or size as well as other animals including, but not limited to birds, primates and ponies. The medical service provider may ask the following types of questions when presented with a service animal:

- "Is this a service dog?" or "Does your animal have legal allowances?"
- "Is the service animal required because of a disability?"

The medical service provider may NOT ask about the nature or extent of the patient's disability except as it relates to patient care.

Service animal registrations, vests, and any other means which identify service animals do not have any legal significance and may be easily obtained online.

PROCEDURE:

1. Service animals may accompany persons with disabilities when coming to the hospital/facility for the purpose of visiting or having diagnostic testing. The determination on service animals belonging to a person who becomes an inpatient will be made by hospital administration on an individual basis, and dependent upon individual circumstances.
2. Associates should not communicate, distract, interact, play, feed or pet service animals.
3. Handler Guidelines:
 - a. The service animal must be under constant control of a responsible handler/volunteer (handler).
 - b. The handler must make sure the service animal has a chance to eliminate before entering the facility. The handler must pick up the elimination in a plastic bag, deposit it in the trash, and wash their hands.
 - c. The handler must focus on the service animal and remove the service animal from any situation where it is too stressed.
 - d. The handler must be sure the service animal has breaks for water and elimination needs.
 - e. The handler must not bring the service animal if either the handler or service animal is sick (unless the handler is seeking treatment).
 - f. The service animals are only allowed in areas open to visitors.
 - g. Health care personnel and patients with a disability should discuss both the possible need for the service animal to be separated from the handler for a period of time during emergent care and an alternate plan of care for the service animal in the event the patient is unable or unwilling to provide care.
 - h. Care of the service animal remains the obligation of the person with the disability, not the health care staff.
 - i. The handler is responsible for the behavior of the service animal (i.e., barking, jumping, biting, running, etc.).
 - j. The determination that a service animal poses a direct threat in any particular health care setting must be based on an individualized assessment of the service animal, the patient, and the health care situation. Excluding a service animal that becomes threatening due to a perceived danger is appropriate.
 - k. Should the service animal bite, injure, or harm an associate during the visit, an Incident Report must be completed by the end of the shift and faxed to the IDM Department. In the event of injury to any other person during the visit, the incident should be reported to the supervisor/designee and an occurrence report completed.
4. Frequent hand washing is essential to prevent the spread of infection whenever handling a service animal.
5. The patient should be in a private area whenever possible.
6. Standard cleaning procedures are sufficient following occupation of an area by a service animal.

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7. Clean up of animal feces or other body substances will be accomplished through our standard environmental service protocols.

ORINATION DATE: 4/09

REPLACES (If applicable): NA

	Date/ Initials	Date/ Initials	Date/ Initials	Date/ Initials	Date/ Initials	Date/ Initials	Date/ Initials	Date/ Initials
REVIEWED:	10/09 JC	09/14 LS	10/16 LS		2/22 LD			
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CSC/OPC APPROVALS: 11/30/16, 1/29/20, OPC 2/23/22, CSC 4/5/22

REFERENCES: FEDERAL LAW: Title I ADA
Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 501
NYS LAW: New York Civil Rights Law §§ 40-c and 47-a
New York Executive Law §§ 296(1)(a) and 296(14)