



ST. LUKE HEALTH SERVICES

DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT

ACTIVITIES

SERVICE ANIMAL VISITATION POLICY

Purpose:

To establish guidelines for the safe and respectful visitation of service animals in the nursing home, ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and maintaining a safe, sanitary, and therapeutic environment for residents, visitors, and staff.

Policy Statement:

Service animals are permitted to visit the nursing home to accompany individuals with disabilities, provided the visit does not compromise infection control, resident safety, or facility operations. The facility recognizes and respects the rights of individuals with disabilities who rely on service animals for assistance.

Definitions:

- **Service Animal:** A dog (or in some cases, a miniature horse) that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability, as defined by the ADA.
- **Visitor:** Any person who is not an employee or resident of the facility, including family members, volunteers, and outside providers.

Procedure:

1. **Verification:**
 - Staff may ask the following two questions only:
 1. Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
 2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?
 - No documentation or certification of the animal's status may be required.
2. **Health and Behavior Requirements:**
 - The service animal must be clean, well-groomed, and free of fleas or ticks.
 - The animal must be under the handler's control at all times (leash, harness, or tether unless such devices interfere with the service animal's work).
 - The animal must display appropriate behavior and not pose a direct threat to residents, staff, or other visitors.
3. **Visitation Areas:**
 - Service animals may accompany their handlers in all resident-accessible areas except where infection control or safety concerns prohibit entry (e.g., kitchen, medication rooms, isolation rooms).
 - Visits to resident rooms are allowed only with the consent of the resident and/or their roommate(s).



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4. Responsibilities of the Handler:

- The handler is responsible for the care, supervision, and control of the service animal at all times.
- The handler must immediately clean and dispose of any animal waste in a sanitary manner.
- The facility will not provide food, water, or veterinary care for visiting service animals.

5. Exclusion Criteria:

A service animal may be asked to leave the premises if:

- The animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it;
 - The animal is not housebroken; or
 - The presence of the animal would pose a legitimate health or safety risk.
- Staff should offer the visitor the option to continue the visit without the animal.

6. Infection Control:

- Service animals are not permitted in areas designated as sterile or in isolation precautions.
- Hand hygiene must be performed by anyone who touches the service animal.
- The Infection Preventionist will review and approve infection control procedures related to animal visits.

7. Documentation:

- The facility requires updated vaccination records to keep on file for all pets that visit, including service animal visits.
- Any incident or concern related to a service animal visit must be reported and documented according to facility policy.

Staff Responsibilities:

- Respect the rights of individuals with disabilities and their service animals.
- Notify the charge nurse or administrator if there are any concerns regarding a service animal's behavior, hygiene, or safety.
- Ensure all residents' rights and preferences are respected during service animal visits.

References:

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) State Operations Manual, Appendix PP – F-tags related to resident rights and safety
- Facility Infection Prevention and Control Policy