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Area Administrative-
Patient Care &
Medical Staff

Service Animals/Animal Assistants, Therapy Animals and Pet Visitation, 15315520

I. Policy

Licking Memorial Health Systems (LMHS) will allow animal assistants and pets in the hospital in accordance with this policy.

II. Definitions

"Animal Assistant" means any animal that aids the disabled.¹ For example, a dog which alerts a hearing impaired person to sounds or guides a visually impaired person.²

"Handler" means the person taking care of the animal assistant or pet. This could be the patient and/or visitor with an animal assistant, a trained person bringing an Animal Assistant to a patient for intervention/therapy, or other individual caring for the animal assistant.

"Pet" means any animal owned by a patient, patient's family, or visitor as an object of affection for personal companionship.

"Service Animal" means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. The task(s) performed by the dog must be directly related to the person's disability.³ Under the ADA, only dogs are considered service animals, except under limited circumstances a miniature horse may be a service animal.

III. Procedure

A. Minimum Infection Control Guidelines for All Non-Service Animals (For Service Animals see section B. Animal Assistants/Service Animals.)

1. Patients, visitors, and health care workers should practice hand hygiene both before and after each animal contact.
2. Animals must be groomed, clean and in good health.
3. Animals must be on a non-retractable leash at all times and in control by the handler while on LMH property.
4. Animals are not permitted in areas where any patient(s):
 - a. Are in isolation
 - b. Have severe allergic reaction to the animal
 - c. Have fears/phobia related to the animal
 - d. Have psychotic or drug related distortions of reality, making it impossible to reassure the patient that the animal is harmless
 - e. Are immunocompromised by the virtue of any surgical or medical treatment or for other reasons
 - I. An exception may be made if pet visitation is approved for a terminally ill patient
 - f. Have severe open wounds or burns
 - g. Are currently undergoing sterile procedures
5. Animals are not permitted in the following patient care areas:
 - a. Operating rooms and other procedural areas
 - b. Post-procedural recovery rooms
 - c. Emergency Department treatment areas
 - d. Intensive care unit
 - e. Intermediate level nursing units, including CCU
 - f. Heart services procedural areas
 - g. Labor & Delivery
 - h. Nursery & Neonatal Special Care Units
 - i. Mother/Infant Post-Partum
 - I. When a service animal accompanies a patient with a disability in the post-partum area the following criteria must be met:
 - The patient must be placed in private room

- The animal must be controlled at all times
 - The animal must be kept away from other patients and families
- j. Radiology
 - k. Dialysis Unit
 - l. Oncology units
 - m. Any area where food or medications are being prepared
6. Animals should not be in patient rooms:
 - a. During dressing changes.
 - b. During any medical procedure (such as phlebotomy, catheterization, etc.).
 - c. While patients are eating or drinking (except for service animals).
 7. Animals should never be left alone with a patient
 8. Any animal excreta in the hospital should be immediately cleaned up by the handler while wearing gloves and discarded appropriately in a toilet or by placing in a plastic bag before being placed into a trash receptacle.
 - a. Hand hygiene should be performed immediately after disposing of excrement and removing gloves
 - b. Environmental Services should be notified immediately to disinfect the area.
 - c. The dog visit should be immediately terminated and the handler should take appropriate measures to prevent recurrence during future visits.
 9. Any scratches, bites, or any other inappropriate animal behavior should be reported to the charge nurse or nurse manager for appropriate follow-up and documentation.
 - a. A hospital unusual occurrence report (UOR) should be completed immediately.

B. Animal Assistants/Service Animals

1. To be permitted on LMHS premises an Animal Assistant must assist the disabled individual with performing tasks. Animals that only provide emotional support, comfort, or companionship, without more, are not viewed as performing tasks to qualify the animal as an assistant.
2. When it is not obvious what service an Animal Assistant provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. **Staff may only ask two questions:** (1) is the animal a Service Animal or Animal Assistant required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the animal been trained to perform.
3. **Examples** of work or tasks protected by the ADA that directly relate to the person's disability include, but are not limited to:
 - Assisting a person who is blind or has low vision with navigation and other tasks;
 - Alerting a person who is deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds;
 - Providing non-violent protection or rescue work;

- Pulling a wheelchair;
 - Assisting a person during a seizure;
 - Alerting a person to the presence of allergens;
 - Retrieving items, such as medicine or the telephone;
 - Providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to a person with a mobility disability; and
 - Helping a person with a psychiatric or neurological disability by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors.
4. **Staff cannot ask** about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the Animal Assistant, or ask that the Animal Assistant demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task. Special identification (such as papers or an identifying "vest") for the animal is not required; there is no recognized "certificate" or "license" for Animal Assistants available.
 5. **It is the responsibility of the Handler** to provide for the care of the Animal Assistant while on the premises. If separation of the Handler and the Animal Assistant is anticipated, alternative care must be arranged for the animal to be walked, fed, and otherwise cared for. If the patient is an inpatient, and other arrangements cannot be made, LMHS staff may provide basic care to the animal as described in paragraph A 1 of this policy.
 6. Generally, Animal Assistants are allowed to accompany the patient with a disability in all areas of LMHS where the public is normally allowed to go. However, in order to maintain a sterile environment, Animal Assistants will be restricted from Surgery areas and any area where isolation precautions are in effect. All other decisions to restrict access will be made on a case by case basis by the Infection Prevention Director or his/her designee.
 7. Animal Assistants may not travel into other patient rooms or otherwise visit other patients, visitors, and staff.
 8. The Director of Shepherd Hill must approve the use of Animal Assistants by any inpatient admitted to Shepherd Hill.
 9. **Excluding/Restricting a Service Animal or Animal Assistant from LMHS**
 - a. The use of an Animal Assistant by a person with a disability may be restricted within LMHS if:
 - the animal behaves in a way that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
 - the animal is out of control and the Handler does not take effective action to control the animal; or
 - the animal is not housebroken.
 - b. LMHS Safety/Security, Legal and/or Risk Management must be notified prior to excluding an Animal Assistant from LMHS.
 - c. If the Animal Assistant is properly excluded based on either threat of harm or behavior, staff must provide the individual using Animal Assistant equal opportunity to obtain the hospital's services and have the tasks performed when the animal is

not present.

10. If a patient is brought into the hospital without their Animal Assistant and they request to have the animal brought in, LMHS staff who are comfortable and willing to go and retrieve the animal may do so if all other efforts to have the animal brought in have failed. The employee retrieving the animal will use their own vehicle and will remain clocked in while performing this duty. It should be reported to the House Supervisor that an animal is being retrieved and who the employee is that will be completing the task.

C. Therapy Animals

1. Therapy animals that participate in an Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) program are allowed in the hospital and when approved, Shepherd Hill. All required documents shall be given to nurse manager and/or charge nurse and House Supervisor prior to scheduling any visits. The documents required are those considered standard protocol for AAT programs.
2. The therapy animal visit will be pre-arranged with the nurse manager and/or charge nurse or therapy representative.
3. Therapy animals require a Provider's order.
4. Therapy animals will have a photo for ID purposes.
5. Therapy animals will wear their ID tags while on the premises.
6. Proof of liability insurance coverage for the therapy group is required.
7. Therapy animals may visit the patient's room and general areas of the hospital.
8. Therapy animals will not be allowed in restricted areas. These areas include those defined under the Service Animals/Animal Assistants section above.
9. Patients will never be alone with the therapy animal. The handler will be present at all times.
10. Any unusual occurrences will be reported to the nurse manager and/or charge nurse or PCC and an incident report should be completed.
11. Any patients may be referred to the AAT program whose therapy goals may be enhanced by such participation.

NOTE: Therapy animals that participate in an Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) program may also be invited to the hospital and office locations for Employee Wellness visits. These visits will occur in non-patient areas, and will be scheduled through the Human Resources Department. Proof of liability insurance coverage for therapy group is required.

D. Pet Visitation

1. Pet Visitation is discouraged except in special circumstances. Minimum Infection Control Guidelines will be followed as stated in section A.
2. Pets may visit critically or terminally ill patients if there are no objections from the attending physician(s) or charge nurse of the unit. Security should be notified. The patient should be in a private room.
3. Visiting pets are limited to dogs and cats.

4. The pet must be restricted to the pet owner and may not visit other patients, visitors, and staff.
5. The appropriateness of the visitation will be determined by the patient's physician or the patient's nurse upon the request of the patient or the patient's family. This determination must be made before the animal is brought inside the hospital. Once determined that the animal visit is appropriate, the visit must be coordinated through the House Supervisor. The House Supervisor will inform the individual responsible for bringing the pet of necessary steps listed below.
6. Once the visit is coordinated through the House Supervisor, the House Supervisor will inform the front desk of the animal visitation and anticipated arrival time. The front desk will let the House Supervisor know when the animal has arrived to allow for proper screening before the animal is allowed inside the hospital.
7. The patient or his/her family will be asked to bathe, groom and treat the dog or cat for fleas (if necessary) within 24 hours of the visit.
8. The health of the animal will be confirmed by the House Supervisor by inspecting the animal to ensure it is clean and free of ectoparasites (fleas, ticks etc.) and skin rashes or problems that may indicate infections.
9. The dog or cat's general temperament will also be screened by the House Supervisor. Aggressive pets or pets with a tendency to bite will not be allowed to visit. Excessively noisy animals will be excluded.
10. If a dog or cat behaves in a way that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, has a history of such behavior, or is not under the control of the Handler, that animal may be removed and not allowed back in the hospital for visitation.
11. The length of visitation may be determined on a case-by-case basis, however, the disposition of the animal, medical condition of patient, and staffing needs will be taken into consideration when making such determination.
12. Animal visitation that is not pre-approved will be refused

IV. References

Americans With Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008

[Ohio Civil Rights Commission](#)

[Disability Rights Ohio](#)

[Hospital Reporting Obligations Pursuant to Ohio Law](#)

1. [28 CFR § 36.104; Ohio Administrative Code 4112-5-02, 5112-5-06](#)
2. [Ohio Administrative Code 4112-5-02](#)
3. [28 CFR § 36.104](#)
4. [Ohio Administrative Code 3701-3-28](#)

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Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
FINAL	Holly Slaughter: VP, HR and Support Svcs	11/21/2024
Safety & Security	Nicholas Keisel: Dir, Safety & Security	3/26/2024
Legal	Natalie Brown: Asst VP, Legal Svcs & GC	3/19/2024
LMHS Police	Nicholas Keisel: Dir, Safety & Security	2/26/2024
	Patricia Priest: Quality Splst	2/26/2024

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