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Accessibility-Service Animals Policy			
Date Issued: July 30, 2021 Date Review/Revised: January 24, 2025 Next Review Date: January 24, 2027			
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Cross Reference: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 			

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Policy

Alexandra Marine and General Hospital is committed to promoting, providing and maintaining an environment where respect and dignity is demonstrated at all times. The right of the individual to be accompanied by a Guide dog or other Service animal, except where excluded by law is supported.

Clinical Note

Service animals are not pets, but working animals; staff will refrain from touching or petting the service animal.

This policy does not apply to pets or other animals. For information on patient pets please refer to the **Pet POLICY** in the Infection Prevention & Control Manual.

Definitions

Service Animals: are defined as animals, typically dogs, trained to perform specific tasks to help people with disabilities maintain independence. Some examples of tasks performed by service animals include guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.

Therapy Animals or Emotional Support Animals: are animals that provide comfort and security. These animals can improve quality of life, reduce loneliness and depression and enhance cognitive function, mobility and promote recovery and a sense of well-being. Support Animals do not have training for specific tasks and do not qualify as Service Animals under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Standard

- Service animals may accompany people with disabilities in all areas of the hospital except where excluded by law or where there is a significant risk to a staff person, patients, or members of the public (infection control risk, safety risk).

- Staff and person with a disability will collaborate, discuss and develop an accessibility plan identifying necessary support arrangements.
- Service animals are not permitted where sterile procedures occur in accordance with the Health Promotion and Protection Act including but not limited to:
 - Operating Rooms, Labour and Delivery Rooms
 - Procedure Rooms or Rooms where sterile interventional procedures are performed (ICU, Medication rooms)
 - In any room where radiation exposure occurs (X-ray, CT)
 - Areas where food preparation occurs.
- Staff will collaborate and discuss with the person with a disability, areas where the presence of the Service animal is not allowed prior to their arrival (where possible) and develop alternate arrangements.
- A patient admitted with a Service animal will be accommodated in a private room, where possible, at no extra charge.
- The service animal must be supervised and the handler/designate must retain full control, and be responsible for the care and behaviour of the animal at all times.
- If in accordance with this policy, it becomes necessary to separate the Service animal from its handler, health care personnel will make all reasonable efforts to help facilitate the transfer of the animal to a designated person, and to support the person in the absence of the Support Animal.
- All owners of a service animal must maintain the appropriate certification and documentation to support the role of the service animal. The person who requires the Service Animal may be asked to provide an identification card, or a letter from a regulated healthcare provider supporting the role of the Service Animal.
- Notice of the availability of Alexandra Marine and General Hospital Accessibility policies will be posted in a conspicuous place on the premises and/or on the Alexandra Marine and General Hospital web page (the intranet and internet).
- All policies and procedure documents related to Accessibility will be available to the public, in a format agreed upon with the person with a disability.

Guidelines

Identifying Service Animals:

- It may be visibly apparent that the patient requires the animal for reasons pertaining to a disability; or
- The patient provides an identification card, or a letter from a healthcare practitioner, confirming that the patient requires the animal for reasons relating to a disability

Tips on interacting with a customer who uses a service animal:

- The Service Animal is a working animal, not a pet. Avoid touching or addressing Service animals: they are working and are required to pay attention at all times. If you inadvertently touch the animal, perform hand hygiene with alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)
- Never ask what type of disability the animal is being used to treat, or suggest that the patient does not appear to require a Service Animal
- If an animal is obviously not a Service Animal, you can ask “Is this a Service Animal?” and ask to see an identification card or a letter from a regulated healthcare professional.
- Notify your manager right away if you are unable to provide care due to allergies or other reasons so that alternate care can be arranged.

- If visitors or other patients are allergic to or afraid of the animal, try to move the patient with the concern to another area.
- Assign the patient with the Service Animal a private room, or with the consent of a roommate, a semi-private room.

Examples of Service Animals and their Roles:

Service Animal	Key Tasks	Users
Autism assistance or service dog.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps a child from running into danger and provides assistance when sensory stimulus is heightened. Dog is attached to the child's waist by a belt and a leash held by an adult. 	People with autism or other developmental/intellectual disabilities.
Guide dog, dog guide or seeing eye dog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows directions of owner, alerts owner to changes in elevation (e.g., curbs, stairs) and obstacles. 	People with vision loss.
Hearing ear, hearing, sound alert or hearing alert dog, cat or animal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alerts owner to sounds often by a nudge or pawing and leads him/her to the source of the sound. • May use a special signal to alert owner to fire alarm. 	People who are Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.
Psychiatric service dog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrieves and prompts the person to take medicine, retrieves or activates medical alert, leads person out of crowds, etc. 	People with mental health disabilities.
Service or mobility dog or animal, special skills dog or animal (Small ponies or miniature horses are used but are not as common).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May pull wheelchairs, carry objects, pull items, turn handles or push buttons such as door openers. Larger dogs may provide balance support. 	People with physical disabilities.
Seizure, seizure alert, seizure assist or seizure response dog or animal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steers owner from danger during a seizure, activates medical alert • Can alert owner to an oncoming seizure 	People who have epilepsy or other seizure disorders.

Ministry of Community and Social Services. Training Resource - Customer Service Standard 429/07 Pg. 27

Reference Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 • Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 Customer Service Standard 429/07 • Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. <i>Service Animal Laws for Ontario Workplaces</i>. Retrieved from https://aoda.ca/service-animal-laws-for-ontario-workplaces/ August 2019.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessibility-Guide Dogs and Other Service Animals, Corporate Manual, Cambridge Memorial Hospital, September 2009.• Accessibility Service Animals, St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital, September 2009.
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