

# KINGSTON GENERAL HOSPITAL

## ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY MANUAL

**Subject:** Service Animals **Number:** 01-215

Prepared/Reviewed by: Patient Relations Specialist, Director Healthy Workplace Services, Director Volunteer Services, Infection Control, Life Safety and Security, Risk Management, MAC, Operations Committee, Senior Leadership Team  
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### Principle

Kingston General Hospital provides integrated health care services which are sensitive, responsive and accessible to all populations. The hospital, within available resources and to the best of its ability and community supports, accommodates service animals.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was enacted in 2005. This policy assists in mitigating anticipated concerns regarding the presence of service animals, and aids in maintaining infection control principles.

### Definition

Service animals are trained to provide assistance to persons with disabilities in activities of daily living to support independence, enhance quality of life, and mitigate their disabilities. They are not considered pets. Service animals provide a variety of services, including but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision; alerting individuals who are hearing impaired to intruders or sounds; providing companionship; pulling a wheelchair; alerting to seizures; opening/closing doors, or retrieving dropped items.

A service animal liaison is recruited by the department of volunteer services to provide stewardship to the service animal in the absence of the owner being able to provide the care. This care includes housing, feeding, toileting, exercising and interacting.

### Policy

1. The Hospital will adhere to regulations and standards as outlined in the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001(ODA) and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).
2. Service animals are welcome to accompany inpatients or outpatients to the hospital.
  - 2.1 Elective surgical inpatients with a need for a service animal presence should identify the requirement through pre-surgical screening and registration.
  - 2.2 Conscious patients with a need for a service animal will not be separated from the service animal unless the owner gives consent, or there are infection control or safety issues.
  - 2.3 For unconscious patients with a service animal, Security Services will take control and obtain appropriate care in the short term until family or alternate can assume care of the service animal.
3. The service animal requirements apply to visitors, staff, volunteers, physicians and learners.
4. The owner/handler has the responsibility of ensuring the service animal is in good health, has the required vaccinations and ensures the animal care required is provided.

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5. Exclusion of a service animal can only occur for reasons that are demonstrable, not speculative or where excluded by other legislation or bylaw.

### Procedure for Welcoming Service Animals

1. Elective Patient Admissions
  - There should be pre-planning and documentation with the owner and health care provider through pre-surgical screening and registration.
  - 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 advance notification has been received;
  - *For elective admissions, Kingston General Hospital 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). The service animal is to remain with the owner at all times. If the patient is unable to manage the service animal, their 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.*
2. 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 their animal for the purpose of infection control or other purposes should arrange their own support person. If they are unable to find someone or if the appointment is unplanned or emergent, the service animal liaison volunteer will take temporary responsibility of the animal during regular business hours (Local 2359).
3. Emergency Patient Admissions
  - Conscious patients able to manage the animal will not be separated unless the owner gives consent or if there are infection control or safety issues.
  - For patients who need help with their service animals due to unforeseen circumstances, who have no support person with them:
    - The charge nurse or delegate will contact security and life safety who will take the animal until the service animal liaison volunteer arrives. Security and Life Safety may need to place in a cage in the interim.
    - A fan-out list of service animal liaison volunteers will be available in security and life safety and they will be contacted to assist with supporting the animal during the transition period.
    - Security and Life Safety will consult with the manager or delegate of the area to determine who will contact the next of kin or support person to come to the hospital and assume responsibility for the animal.

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- If the patient needs to be separated for a prolonged period of time and no contact person of the patient is available, the service animal liaison volunteer 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.

### Responsibilities

#### 1. Owner

- The service animal's owner is responsible for its control and stewardship i.e. the animal's behaviour, care, supervision and wellbeing.
- The owner is responsible for making available training school and up to date immunization records if requested.
- The service animal should be clearly identified/recognizable (e.g. identification card, harness or jacket with markings of the training school). If in doubt, consult with risk management. In the absence of identification of certification a medical authorization is required.

#### 2. Manager or Delegate

- Inform 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 health care provider is responsible to find an alternate professional who will provide that care and document this in the patient's health record.

#### 3. Staff (including Physicians)

- Obtain the consent of the owner before attempting to separate a patient from their service animal;
- Obtain permission of the owner prior to touching a service animal as the animals are specially trained.
- Refrain from petting a service animal or distracting from the service animal task at hand;
- Refrain from providing food/treats to the service animal as only the owner or personal support person who have knowledge of the specific dietary requirements;
- Refrain from deliberately startling a service animal;
- Volunteer Services will appoint the service animal liaison and will maintain the service animal liaison volunteer list. The temporary care of services animals is outlined in Appendix A.
- **Note:** If hospital personnel 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.

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#### 4. Safety

If anyone sustains an injury from a service animal, a safe reporting event must be completed detailing the name of the injured, circumstances, and nature of injury. For staff or volunteers, incidents/events must be reported to their supervisor/manager immediately. The event/ incident must be reported in the safe reporting system, and follow up with occupational health and safety if first aid or follow up is required. Occupational health and safety will assess the individual to determine need to provide prophylactic treatment and report to public health unit.

#### 5. Infection Control

- Any animal with diarrhea will be excluded from the hospital, until an etiology is established by a veterinarian
- All service animals must have an up-to-date immunization record, especially for rabies.
- Service animals will not be allowed in surgical suites or like areas.
- The admittance of service animals to critical care areas will be evaluated on a case by case basis by the manager or delegate, infection control practitioner, attending physician and any other care team members.
- Service animals will be allowed into patient rooms which are on additional precautions (contact, droplet, airborne), as the animal has been exposed prior to the hospital visit, and will be exposed after the hospital visit. The animal does NOT have to wear any PPE (personal protective equipment).
- Patients utilizing service animals must perform hand hygiene on leaving their rooms, or after providing care to their animal. The Four Moments for Hand Hygiene will be explained to the patient by their health care provider and documented.
- Care can be provided only after separated from patient care and hand hygiene practices are followed ensuring hands are cleaned before and after contact with the animal using alcohol hand sanitizer (if hands are not visibly soiled) or soap and water. This care includes, but is not limited to feeding, toileting, exercising and interacting.
- If the animal contaminates the area, the cleanup procedures should be performed by using appropriate PPE. Gloves are the minimum protection that should be used. The spill should be removed with paper towels, which should be placed in a plastic bag in the garbage, similar to the disposal of diapers. After removal of the organic debris, the area of the spill should be cleaned with a facility-approved disinfectant, allowing for proper contact time

#### 6. 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 removed from the area where the

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animal is located. Each situation is to be considered individually and in consultation with the owner. Discussion with your direct manager, Occupational Health and Safety and 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 behavior 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.***

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

1. Discuss with 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.<sup>1</sup>

### References

<http://info2/policies/generalmanual/organization/l-d-65-73-Access-for-people-with-Disabilities.doc>

The Accessibility For Ontarians With Disabilities Act The Ontarians With Disabilities Directorate - Ontario Regulation 429/07

[http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/what/AODA\\_2005.htm](http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/mcass/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/what/AODA_2005.htm)

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](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/mmwrR/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5210a1.htm>

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<sup>1</sup> Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Health-Care Facilities: Recommendations of CDC and the Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC)

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Authorizing Signature:

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Leslee Thompson  
President and Chief Executive Officer