



Corporate Standard Operating Procedure

Pet Visitation, Pet Therapy and Assistance Animals in the Hospital

[\(version française\)](#)

Purpose Statement:

A patient's personal cat or dog may visit The Ottawa Hospital (TOH) if it is deemed therapeutic and/or on compassionate grounds. TOH recognizes that animals may have an important role to play in the healing journey of some of our patients. This SOP is in place to help determine under what conditions certain animals may be permitted at TOH.

The Ottawa Hospital will accept only those services of a recognized Service Animal visitation or therapy dog program.

Service dogs that serve persons with disabilities are permitted in all hospital areas. However, dogs are discouraged from entering areas where sterility must be maintained. The clinical service manager should be consulted under these circumstances.

Guide Dog & Service Animals - Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in those areas of TOH open to the public, unless such animal is excluded by another law or may cause any safety or health issues to other staff or patients.

Scope: All Clinical Staff, Patients and Visitors

Alerts:

Pets (dogs/cats) are not permitted:

- to come in contact with non-intact skin sites of patients (e.g. surgical site, drainage tubes, wounds), or;
- in the cafeteria, areas where people are eating or food is being prepared, or;
- the burn unit, isolation rooms, areas of outbreak management or in areas that normally require additional precautions to prevent disease transmission.

Definitions:

Animal Team: Visitation animal or therapy dog and their handler.

Animal Visit: Friendly visit by a registered visitation animal or therapy dog and its registered handler with the appropriate level of supervision as determined by the Health-care Staff Person.

Dog-assisted Therapy: Specific, goal directed therapy visits by registered therapy dog(s) and registered therapy dog handler(s) under the direct supervision of a health-care staff person.

Pet: Dog or cat only.

Guide Dog: is trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulation as defined in section 1 of the *Blind Persons' Rights Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7, s 1 (1)*.

Health-care Staff Person: Includes staff such as recreation therapists and speech-language pathologists.

Service Animal: an animal is a Service Animal for a person with a disability if:

(a) the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or

(b) the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Typically, a Service Animal can be easily identified through visual indicators, such as when it wears a harness or a vest, or when it helps the person perform certain tasks.

When the animal cannot be easily identified as a Service Animal, a TOH staff may ask the owner of the animal to provide documentation from a regulated health professional that confirms the person needs the Service Animal for reasons related to their disabilities. The letter can originate from a member of the following:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario

A Guide Dog or Service Animal can be used by, for example, individuals who are blind, have autism, mental health issues, physical or dexterity disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their Guide Dog or Service Animal in those areas of TOH open to the public, unless such animal is excluded by another law. If excluded by law, the patient will be notified of the reason for the exclusion of the animal and other measures will be used to provide services to the person with a disability.

If the Guide Dog or Service Animal is causing any safety or hygiene problems for staff or patients, the hospital may ask that the dog be removed.

If a patient who uses the services of a Guide Dog or Service Animal is to be admitted to the hospital, the patient must make arrangements for someone to care for it outside of the hospital property.

The Ottawa Hospital: includes the grounds of The Ottawa Hospital.

Equipment: n/a

Procedure(s):

Pet Visitation:

The dog/cat is permitted in the patient's room or in the patient's lounge if it does not negatively affect other patients in any way. (Negative reactions can include, but are not limited to allergies to the pet, or fear of the pet.)

1. The clinical manager, in consultation with the physician, will determine whether a patient's dog/cat should be permitted to visit a patient. This evaluation shall include the impact on particularly susceptible patients such as patients who have had splenectomies, bone marrow or solid organ transplant, patients with burns, patients who are severely neutropenic, critically ill, or receiving immunosuppressive agents.
2. The clinical manager will ensure that the following criteria are met:
 - it is the patient's personal dog/cat
 - the dog/cat is at least one year old, and
 - the dog/cat is well groomed, clean, housetrained and good tempered.
3. The clinical manager or delegate will:
 - ask that the dog/cat be removed if the animal causes problems for staff, patients and/or visitors, and
 - complete an incident report if an unusual incident occurs or anyone is harmed by a dog/cat.
4. Housekeeping staff will disinfect dog/cat soiled area after family members or friends have completed the initial clean-up.

Family members or friends wishing to bring a patient's dog/cat to TOH will:

1. Consult with the clinical manager to determine appropriateness of visit by the patient's dog or cat
2. Obtain the "Authorization for Dog/Cat Visitation form" (**Attachment A**) from the clinical manager for completion by a veterinarian. At the Rehabilitation Centre, the authorization will be issued by Volunteer Resources
3. Upon completion of the "Authorization for Dog/Cat Visitation form", the family member must keep the authorization form with them at all times when the patient's dog/cat is visiting the hospital. Hospital employees may ask to see the authorization at any time that the dog/cat is in the hospital
4. Ensure that the animal is either on a leash less than six feet long or in a carrying case at all times
5. Ensure the dog/cat visits only the specific patient who owns the animal
6. Not leave the dog/cat alone with the patient
7. Ensure that only one dog/cat visits the patient at a time
8. Limit the dog/cat visit to a maximum of two hours
9. Wash their hands (or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer) before and after contact with the dog/cat
10. Be responsible for cleaning up dog/cat soiled areas using gloves and paper towels to absorb or pick up the excrement and disposing it in garbage bags. When gloves are removed, hands must be washed. Family members or friends must also inform the nursing staff who will notify Housekeeping Services to disinfect the area with the hospital-grade disinfectant

11. Be responsible to keep medical documentation annually updated for each animal

Pet Therapy

1. The Department of Volunteer Resources will register all animals and their handlers as hospital volunteers.
2. A health-care staff person will oversee the animal visitation or therapy dog program on behalf of the hospital by:
 - acting as an internal hospital contact for staff, patients and their families seeking this service
 - identifying patients who would likely benefit from the visit
 - ensuring that each patient and/or family has given informed consent prior to dog visitation
 - meeting with the animal team or handler, evaluating appropriateness and approving their services prior to visiting patients
 - ensuring that the therapy dog handler has read the content of this policy
 - ensuring that an appropriate level of staff supervision is provided during the visit
 - maintaining a liaison with animal visitation and therapy dog service provider programs including advising the relevant program contact person of any unusual incidents occurring in the hospital in relation to the animal team or handler
 - managing internal hospital issues relating to animal visitation and therapy dogs, in consultation with Volunteer Resources
 - documenting according to their health-care discipline's standards of practice, and
 - completing an incident report if an unusual incident occurs or if anyone is harmed by a visitation or therapy animal.
3. The visitation animal, therapy dog and their handlers must:
 - be registered with Volunteer Resources, and
 - must wear TOH photo identification badges at all times within the hospital.
4. The animal visitation or therapy dog handler must:
 - attend TOH Volunteer orientation or equivalent
 - read and comply with the content of this policy
 - be responsible for cleaning up animal soiled areas using gloves and paper towels to absorb or pick up the excrement and disposing of it in garbage bags. When gloves are removed, hands must be washed. The animal visitation or therapy dog handler must also inform the nursing staff who will notify Housekeeping Services to disinfect the area with the hospital-grade disinfectant, and
 - notify the health-care staff person of the incident and the procedures that were followed.
5. Service animals must be leashed at all times except when warranted (e.g. may be doing a demonstration of obedience).
6. Service animals are not permitted in the cafeteria, areas where people are eating or food is being prepared, medication preparation areas, sterile supply areas, intensive care unit, burn unit, isolation rooms, areas of outbreak management, or areas that normally require additional precautions to prevent disease transmission.
7. Service animals must be kept in an appropriate area assigned by the health-care staff person.
8. Patient should not be permitted to eat or drink during the visit.
9. Patients and staff members must wash hands (or use alcohol gel hand sanitizer) before and after animal visits and dog-assisted therapy.

10. Both the health-care staff person and the animal visitation or therapy dog program will be responsible to keep medical documentation annually updated for each animal.
11. The therapy dog handler will sign in at the computer in Volunteer Resources for themselves and their dog prior to and after visiting.

Guide Dogs & Service Animals

1. Guide Dogs & Service Animals must wear special harnesses at all times while in the hospital.
2. Guide Dogs & Service Animals must have identification badges that the owners must carry at all times. A hospital employee may ask to see the identification badge at any time. If the owner does not have an identification badge, the organization that has trained or registered the dog can be contacted for verification.
3. If the Guide Dog or Service Animal is causing any safety or hygiene problems for staff or patients, the hospital may ask that the dog be removed.
4. If the patient is to be admitted, the patient must arrange for the dog to be cared for by family, friends or volunteers, if it remains with the patient in the hospital.

Related Documents:

- [Accessibility](#)


Related Documents:

- Authorization for Pet Visitation (**Appendix A**)

Regulatory or Legislative References:

- [Blind Persons' Rights Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. B.7](#)
- [Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7](#)
- [Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.19](#)

Appendix A - Annexe A

 <p>AUTHORIZATION FOR DOG/CAT VISITATION AUTORISATION DE VISITE D'ANIMAUX DE COMPAGNIE</p>	
TO BE COMPLETED BY OWNER - DÉCLARATION DU PROPRIÉTAIRE DE L'ANIMAL	
Patient	Clinical Manager - Gérant clinique
Unit - Unité	Room no. - N° de chambre
Type of pet - Sorte d'animal : <input type="checkbox"/> Dog - Chien <input type="checkbox"/> Cat - Chat Sex - Sexe : <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> M Pet's name - Nom de l'animal : _____ Age - Âge : _____ Breed - Race Colour - Couleur Identifying features - Caractéristiques	
Owner's name - Nom du propriétaire	Veterinarian's name - Nom du vétérinaire
Address - Adresse	Address - Adresse
Telephone no. - No de téléphone	Telephone no. - No de téléphone
HEALTH HISTORY - ANTÉCÉDENTS	
Has the pet been fully inoculated, and are vaccinations up to date? L'animal a-t-il été vacciné et les vaccins sont-ils à jour?	Yes-Oui No-Non
Rabies vaccination - Vaccin contre la rage Date : _____ (Copy of certificate - Copie du certificat)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the pet housebroken - L'animal est-il propre?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the pet healthy - L'animal est-il en bonne santé?	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>I agree to follow the dog / cat visitation guidelines outlined by The Ottawa Hospital. Further, I agree to assume responsibility for the action of my pet animal. I am aware that The Ottawa Hospital reserves the right to limit, refuse or suspend pet visitation.</p> <p>Je m'engage à respecter toutes les directives de L'Hôpital d'Ottawa en matière de visites d'animaux. Je suis prêt à assumer toutes les responsabilités liées aux faits et gestes de mon animal. Je reconnais que l'Hôpital se réserve le droit de limiter, de refuser ou de suspendre les visites d'animaux.</p>	
Signature (Pet owner - Propriétaire de l'animal)	Date (yyaa/mmm/dj)

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TO BE DESTROYED UPON PATIENT DISCHARGE - VEUILLEZ DÉTRUIRE SUITE AU CONGÉ DU PATIENT