

SCMH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SERVICE ANIMALS

Policy Author:

SR

POLICY: SCMH is committed to patient- and family-centered care and to providing a safe, accessible, and respectful environment for patients, visitors, staff, and service animals. Service dogs will be permitted in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable laws. Service dogs may accompany individuals with disabilities in areas where patients or members of the public are normally permitted, except where their presence is legally restricted due to safety, infection prevention, or other applicable concerns.

DEPARTMENT INVOLVED: All Departments

RESPONSIBLE PERSON: Department Managers, Supervisors, and designated staff responsible for patient care and safety.

PROCEDURE:

1. Definition of a Service Animal

- A service animal is a dog that is individually trained to perform work or tasks for a person with a disability.
- The work or tasks performed must be directly related to the person's disability.
- Pets, emotional support animals, comfort animals, therapy animals, companion animals, and other species are not considered service animals under the ADA's general definition.

2. Access to the Hospital

- Service dogs may accompany individuals with disabilities in areas of SCMH where patients or members of the public are normally permitted.
- Service animals may be restricted from areas where their presence would fundamentally alter the nature of services provided, create a direct threat to health or safety, or create other legitimate safety or infection-prevention concerns. Animals will not be allowed in food preparation areas, laundry, surgical services, Medication prep areas, or patient isolation rooms.
- Patients should be reunited with their service animals as soon as it is safe to do so when temporary separation is required.

3. Restricted Areas

Service animals may not be permitted in areas that:

- Require aseptic or sterile environments because of increased infection risk, including surgical and procedural areas, burn units, or areas caring for immunocompromised patients.
- Use radiation, radioactive materials, or strong magnets, including applicable imaging areas.
- Use chemotherapy or other hazardous medications or substances.
- Are occupied by another patient when the presence of the service animal would create a legitimate safety, privacy, or infection-control concern.

4. Owner/Handler Responsibilities

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- The owner/handler is responsible for the service animal at all times.
- Service animals may not be left unattended.
- Hospital staff are not responsible for supervising, feeding, toileting, or otherwise caring for service animals.
- If a patient cannot supervise or care for the service animal, the patient must designate another individual to assume responsibility.
- The owner/handler must provide food, water, opportunities for toileting, and other necessary care.
- The owner/handler must take immediate action to regain control if the service animal becomes disruptive.
- The owner/handler is responsible for damage caused by the service animal, including personal injury or property damage, consistent with applicable law.
- Any injury involving the service animal must be reported immediately to hospital staff.
- The owner/handler is responsible for arranging veterinary care if the service animal becomes sick or injured while on hospital premises.

5. Service Animal Requirements

- The service animal must remain under the control of its owner/handler.
- The service animal must remain harnessed, leashed, or tethered unless these devices interfere with the animal's work or the person's disability prevents their use.
- When a harness, leash, or tether cannot be used, the owner/handler must maintain control through another effective method, such as voice or signal control.
- The service animal must remain in areas where service animals are permitted.
- The service animal must be housebroken and appropriately groomed.
- Service animals must not drink from public water sources, including drinking fountains, sinks, or toilets.
- Service animals must not come into contact with another patient's nonintact skin, including surgical sites, wounds, drain sites, or tube sites.

6. Patients Undergoing Surgery or Procedures

- Service animals may remain with patients in designated waiting areas throughout surgeries or procedures when otherwise permitted.
- During surgery or a procedure, the patient may be unable to supervise or care for the service animal.
- The patient must designate another individual to supervise and care for the service animal until the patient has recovered sufficiently to resume responsibility.
- Following the surgery or procedure, the patient should be reunited with the service animal as soon as it is safe to do so.

7. Removal of a Service Animal

- Staff may require that a service animal be removed from the hospital premises when the service animal becomes disruptive and the owner/handler does not take immediate effective action to regain control.
- An urgent or emergent situation requires removal.
- The service animal's presence fundamentally alters the nature of the services being provided.

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- The service animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated or reduced through reasonable measures.
- Other legitimate safety concerns require removal.

8. Staff Response

- Staff should support service animal access consistent with the ADA and other applicable laws.
- Staff should not make assumptions about a service animal based on breed, size, appearance, or the absence of certification or identification.
- When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions:
 - **Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?**
 - **What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?**
- Questions or concerns regarding service animals should be referred to the appropriate department manager, supervisor, infection prevention personnel, or other designated hospital resource.

9. Regulatory Guidance

- Staff should follow applicable federal and state laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act.