



**Vice President and Chief Executive Officer of the Medical Center**

**MEDICAL CENTER POLICY NO. 0246**

A. SUBJECT: Animals in the Medical Center

B. EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2014 (R)

C. POLICY:

The University of Virginia Medical Center recognizes the benefits of animals in service and therapy functions, and complies with applicable requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Whenever possible, and consistent with the requirements of the ADA (Title II), the Medical Center permits the presence of animals involved in service to persons with disabilities and as part of therapeutic interactions consistent with patients' overall well being. However, the Medical Center will balance requests to allow animals into its facilities with its duty to maintain an environment that does not pose an undue risk of infection, harm or disruption for patients, visitors and employees.

The University of Virginia Medical Center also recognizes the contributions of animals to research efforts and has developed guidelines in collaboration with the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee regarding conduct of animal research within Patient Care Areas of the Medical Center. These guidelines<sup>1</sup> are available by contacting the University of Virginia Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Office at 924-0405.

D. DEFINITIONS

1. "Service Animals" are dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide emotional support, well being, comfort or companionship (i.e., companion animals or pets—see definition below) do not qualify as service animals under the ADA (see Appendix A to 28 CFR Part 35)

Miniature horses are not service animals under the ADA. The Medical Center shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the miniature horse has been individually trained to do

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<sup>1</sup> These guidelines were developed by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee and were approved by Medical Center Administration. The Guidelines contain citations to and discussion of applicable State and Federal statutes, regulations and other relevant standards

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work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with a disability, and meets all other requirements for classification as a service animal outlined in this policy and in applicable ADA regulations. Because miniature horses can vary in size and can be larger and less flexible than dogs, the Medical Center may exclude a miniature horse when its larger size and lower level of flexibility results in a fundamental alteration to the nature of services provided or would otherwise disrupt patient care or business operations.

Therefore, consistent with ADA regulations, four assessment factors shall be considered in determining whether a miniature horse can be accommodated at the Medical Center as a service animal: (1) whether the miniature horse is housebroken; (2) whether the miniature horse is under the owner's control; (3) whether the Medical Center can accommodate the miniature horse's type, size and weight; and (4) whether the miniature horse's presence will compromise legitimate safety requirements necessary for the safe operation of the Medical Center.

2. "Companion animals" are animals that provide emotional support and may help alleviate symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. A companion animal does not assist an individual with a disability in the activities of daily living, nor does a companion animal accompany a person with a disability all the time, unlike a service animal that is always with its partner. Companion animals include pets.
3. "Therapy Animals" are trained to provide comfort and affection to people in hospitals and other stressful settings, and are typically dogs. Therapy dogs provide animal contact for people who may or may not have a disability. Therapy dogs work in animal-assisted activities and animal-assisted therapy. These dogs are commonly owned by the persons handling them, who consider the dogs to be personal pets. Therapy dogs often work with their handler during sessions. Handlers of these dogs might be health care professionals who are members of the staff of the Medical Center or of another facility. All Therapy animals and their handlers must be screened and approved by the Department of Volunteer Services.

#### E. PROCEDURES:

##### 1. Service Animals:

###### a. *Inquiries:*

When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries may be made. Staff may ask two questions:

- i. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- ii. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

**Staff cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.**

###### b. *Control:*

- i. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using

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these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal or other effective controls.

- ii. A person with a disability may not be asked to remove his/her service animal from the premises unless:
  - a) the dog is out of control and the person does not take effective action to control it, or
  - b) the dog is not housebroken.

When there is reason to ask that a service animal be removed, staff must offer the individual the opportunity to receive healthcare services or to visit a patient without the service animal being present.

- iii. *Care and supervision*
  - a) Staff is not required to provide care or food for a service animal.
  - b) The care and supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of its owner. If the owner is temporarily unable to care for a service animal, e.g., the owner is undergoing surgery, the owner must have arranged for a third party to care for the animal during that period of time.
- c. *Accommodating needs of others:*

Others' allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for refusing to allow service animals on the premises. For example, when a person who is allergic to dog dander or is fearful of dogs, and a person who uses a service animal, must spend time in the same room or setting, efforts to assign them to different locations, if possible, must be made.
- d. *Infection control:*
  - i. Consistent with CDC (Centers for Disease Control) guidance, it is generally appropriate to exclude a service animal from limited-access areas that employ general infection-control measures, such as operating rooms and burn units. See Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:  
[http://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/pdf/guidelines/eic\\_in\\_hcf\\_03.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/hicpac/pdf/guidelines/eic_in_hcf_03.pdf)
  - ii. All patients, visitors, and health care workers are expected to practice hand hygiene before and after each and every animal contact.

Requests for guidance on questions about Service Animals shall be directed to the Medical Center Infection Control Office at 924-0260, Medical Center Safety Officer at 434-924-2304, or the Medical Center Administrator on Call (PIC #1456).

## 2. Therapy Animals

- a. Therapy Animals and their handlers must be screened and qualified by the Department of Volunteer Services (434-924-5251) before being accepted into the Therapy Animal Program.
  - i. The Department of Volunteer Services shall confirm that the animal has been certified by Therapy Dogs International, Inc. (TDI), Pet Partners (through the Delta Society) or Therapy Dog Incorporated.

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- ii. Therapy Animal handlers must be accepted into the Medical Center's volunteer program.
  - b. Therapy Animals may be excluded if they are the sources of allergic or fearful reactions in others receiving services from or working within the Medical Center, or do not otherwise meet requirements outlined by the Department of Volunteer Services. Additionally, the following requirements apply:
    - i. A veterinarian must examine the animal prior to the visit. Dogs must be vaccinated against rabies as required by state and local law. For the protection of the animal, as well as patients, staff and visitors with whom the animal might come into contact, a Therapy Animal is prohibited from entering any Medical Center facility starting from the onset, and until at least one week beyond the resolution, of:
      - a) Episodes of vomiting or diarrhea
      - b) Urinary or fecal incontinence
      - c) Episodes of sneezing or coughing of unknown or suspected infectious origin
      - d) Treatment with non-topical antimicrobials or with immunosuppressive doses of medications
      - e) Open wounds
      - f) Ear infections
      - g) Skin infections or "hot spots" (i.e. acute moist dermatitis)
      - h) Orthopedic or other conditions that, in the opinion of the animal's veterinarian, could result in pain or distress to the animal during handling and/or when maneuvering within the facility
      - i) Demonstrated signs of heat (estrus)
    - ii. The handler shall assume full responsibility for the animal.
    - iii. The animal shall be confined or on a leash at all times.
    - iv. The animal shall be bathed (wet or dry shampoo) within twenty-four hours of the visit.
    - v. The animal visitation shall occur at a time agreed upon by the nursing staff.
  - c. Any unit that maintains 'resident' therapy animals, e.g. a rabbit or other small animal on a pediatric unit must have developed plans for the safe care of the animal, and must have approval from Hospital Epidemiology for keeping the animal.
  - d. All Therapy Animal Handlers, as well as any patients, visitors, and health care workers with whom the Therapy Animal may come into contact, are expected to practice hand hygiene before and after each and every animal contact.
3. Companion Animal/Pets
  - a. Companion Animal/pet visitation shall be permitted only following a clinical assessment of benefit and adherence to the following guidelines:
  - b. Companion animals/pets shall be limited to dogs, cats, or small animals such as rabbits.

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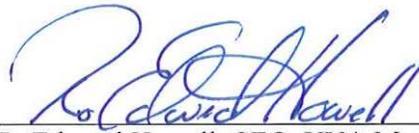
- c. Reptiles and amphibians (e.g., lizards, turtles, frogs, salamanders), nonhuman primates, rodents (e.g., hamsters, gerbils, mice, rats), hedgehogs, prairie dogs, or any other recently domesticated animal species and animals that have not been litter trained, are prohibited.
- d. A veterinarian must examine the animal prior to the visit. Dogs and cats must be vaccinated against rabies as required by state and local law. For the protection of the animal, as well as patients, staff and visitors with whom the animal might come into contact, a companion animal/pet is prohibited from entering any Medical Center facility starting from the onset, and until at least one week beyond the resolution, of:
  - i. Episodes of vomiting or diarrhea
  - ii. Urinary or fecal incontinence
  - iii. Episodes of sneezing or coughing of unknown or suspected infectious origin
  - iv. Treatment with non-topical antimicrobials or with immunosuppressive doses of medications
  - v. Open wounds
  - vi. Ear infections
  - vii. Skin infections or “hot spots” (i.e. acute moist dermatitis)
  - viii. Orthopedic or other conditions that, in the opinion of the animal’s veterinarian, could result in pain or distress to the animal during handling and/or when maneuvering within the facility
  - ix. Demonstrated signs of heat (estrus)
- e. The family shall assume full responsibility for the animal.
- f. The animal shall be confined or on a leash at all times.
- g. The animal shall be bathed (wet or dry shampoo) within twenty-four hours of the visit.
- h. The animal visitation shall occur at a time agreed upon by the nursing staff.
- i. Patient owned animals are not allowed to visit other patients, visitors, staff or animals.
- j. All patients, visitors, and health care workers are expected to practice hand hygiene before and after each and every animal contact.

Family pets belonging to Medical Center employees or other individuals working within Medical Center facilities are not allowed within Medical Center facilities.

No aquariums may be acquired or maintained by any department or clinical service area within the Medical Center without the express written authorization of the Chief responsible for the area where the aquarium is to be located; if so authorized, the aquarium must be serviced and maintained by a qualified service provider.

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SIGNATURE:



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R. Edward Howell, CEO, UVA Medical Center

DATE:

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12/19/13

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Approved March 2003

Reviewed June 2006, June 2009

Revised June 2012, December 2013

Approved by Chief Environment of Care Officer

Approved by Medical Center Administration