



CORE PROGRAM: ADMINISTRATION
APPROVED BY: DIANE BROWN DEMARCO

NUMBER: AD-B-009
DATE: APRIL 2021
SUBJECT: AODA – SERVICE AND THERAPY ANIMALS

POLICY STATEMENT

Service animals and therapy animals are welcomed at Canadian Mental Health Association, Muskoka-Parry Sound (CMHAMPS). Staff or client pets, animals that do not belong to staff or clients and/or wild animals are not welcomed on CMHAMPS property or at CMHAMPS sanctioned events.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, a service animal is defined as either;

1. A trained “guide dog” as defined in Section 1 of the Blind Persons Rights Act; or
2. A “service animal” for a person with a disability. For the purpose of this policy, an animal is a service animal if;
 - a. It is readily apparent that the animal is used by the person for reasons relating to his/her disability. “Readily apparent” means that it is obvious by its appearance or by what the animal is doing. For example, the animal may be wearing a harness, saddle bag, or sign that identifies it as a service animal.
 - b. It has a certificate or identification card from a service animal training school or identification card from the Attorney General of Ontario
 - c. The animal assists the person in doing things, for example, opening doors or retrieving items, alerting persons with hearing impairment, pulling wheelchairs, alerting to seizures, guiding individuals with impaired vision.

For the purpose of the policy, a therapy animal is defined as either;

1. An animal that is owned by the person; and
2. The person has a letter from a regulated health professional that confirms the animal is needed because of a disability. The letter is not required to identify the disability, why the animal is needed or how it is used.

A service animal has been specifically trained to work for or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. A service animal is not a pet. The majority of service animals are dogs but other animals may also be used.

PROCEDURE

1. If a person with a disability is accompanied by a service animal, staff shall ensure that the person is permitted to enter the premises with the animal and to keep the animal with them unless otherwise excluded by law from the premises. Service-Therapy animals are excluded from areas where food is being prepared and stored.
2. If the animal is not readily identified as a service animal, staff may ask the person for evidence demonstrating the animal as either a service animal or therapy animal: *“Can you please tell me why you are being accompanied by an animal today?” “Do you have supporting documentation, such as an identification card from a training school or a letter from a health professional, showing you require a service animal for a disability?”* IMPORTANT: Never ask what type of disability the service animal is being used for or suggest the individual does not “look like” they have a disability.
3. If required documentation is not available when requested, staff are not obligated to allow entry of the animal into/onto CMHAMPS property until such documentation is provided by the person. Staff should

however use discretion on this issue recognizing that clients/visitors may not be aware of agency policies before arriving. Each situation should be considered individually and in consultation with the owner, and supervisor if necessary.

4. The person is responsible for the care, supervision and control of the service-therapy animal at all times.
5. Staff will not touch a service-therapy animal without permission of the owner of the animal and will not speak to a service-therapy animal while it is working.
6. Staff will direct the person to an appropriate location outside of the office environment should the animal need to relieve itself and will communicate to the person their responsibility for supervision and care of the service-therapy animal while on agency property.
7. Document information relating to the service animal or therapy animal in the Accessibility widget of the Patient Profile in TREAT.

TIPS ON INTERACTING WITH SERVICE ANIMALS

- Treat service animals as working animals, not pets.
- Do not touch, feed, make eye contact or otherwise interact with a service animal without asking first for the owner's permission. Distracting a service animal may endanger the owner.
- Familiarize the owner with an area for walking a service animal.
- Offer to provide water for the service animal if a client with a service animal will be on the premises for some time.
- Provide a garbage container and show the owner where a service animal can relieve itself outside.

BALANCING COMPETING NEEDS AND RIGHTS

- There may be times when the needs or rights of a client with a service animal compete with the needs or rights of other clients. For example:
 - A person may have severe asthma and cannot be near fur or feathers
 - A person may have a strong phobia about birds, monkeys or other service animals
 - Cultural/Religious traditions sees may view certain animals as unhealthy or harmful.
- Most people with disabilities or special needs have experience handling these situations and should be asked for their ideas. Staff will assist clients in arriving at a mutually agreeable solution that is based on the severity of the health condition, respecting rights enshrined in the Human Rights Code and considering alternatives that are available within the agency.

RISK MANAGEMENT

- Ensure the animal remains in the owner's control at all times.
- Where there is contact with the animal, hand hygiene must be performed.
- If the animal is involved in an incident where an injury has been inflicted, the owner shall provide up to date immunization records for the service animal or therapy animal. If an incident occurs involving the animal, an adverse event report will be completed.
- A service animal or therapy animal may be removed or excluded from agency property where one of the following applies:
 - a. The animal poses a risk to the health and safety of other and cannot be mitigated, for example, the animal displays vicious, aggressive, threatening behaviours).
 - b. The owner is not able to provide care to the animal and/or remain in control of the animal at all times.
 - c. The animal is visibly unhealthy and there may be risk relating to infection prevention and control.
- In the event that an animal is removed or excluded, the staff will:
 - a. Document the circumstances and rationale for the removal or exclusion and,
 - b. Communicate to the owner the rationale for the removal or exclusion and,
 - c. Make appropriate arrangements to meet the person's needs in absence of the animal and,
 - d. Ensure the animal is permitted to return once the concerns have been resolved to the satisfaction of the agency.
- If a staff member or client expresses concern that they are allergic to or afraid of the animal, the individual expressing objections should be separated from the animal, providing this does not negatively impact the services being provided or received and appropriate arrangements to meet client and staff needs are made.

(Reference: www.aoda.ca/customer-care-guide/)
(Reference: Sinai Health System; policy I-D-80-100)

LINKAGES

AD-B-002 Support and Service for People with Disabilities

Revision	Date of Approval	Description of Change
	October 2018	
3	April 13, 2021	Formatting / Enhanced Tips / Needs & Rights