Canadian Mental Health Association
Muskoka - Parry Sound

Addictions and Mental Health Services

CORE PROGRAM: ADMINISTRATION
APPROVED BY: DIANE BROWN-DEMARCO

NUMBER: HR-A-011
DATE: JUNE 2025
SUBJEC SERVICE ANIMALS

POLICY STATEMENT

Canadian Mental Health Association Muskoka-Parry Sound is committed to upholding the requirements and guidelines provided by Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) related to Service Animal Laws.

Service 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.

What Qualifies as a Service Animal in Ontario:

Whether an animal will qualify as a service animal for a person with a disability is defined by law in Ontario, primarily in the Customer Service Standards of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA). AODA standards indicate that some service animals may be readily identifiable by visual indicators worn by the animal that indicate the animal is being used by a person for reasons related to a disability.

CMHAMPS may ask for proof to identify the animal as a service animal, unless it is visibly obvious that the person has a disability and is relying on the animal. For instance, if a dog is clearly guiding a client who is blind, providers should know without asking that this animal is a guide dog.
https://www.aoda.ca/service-animal-laws-for-ontario-workplaces/

Service animals are animals, typically dogs, specifically trained to work for or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. A service animal is not a pet. For example, they perform tasks, such as:

• Guiding a blind or visually impaired handler around obstacles
• Alerting a handler with diabetes about low blood sugar levels
• Protecting a handler with epilepsy during seizures
• Calming a handler with autism in an environment with too much sensory stimulation
• Retrieving out-of-reach objects for a handler with a physical disability
• Alerting a handler who is deaf or hard of hearing about sounds

How to Identify a Service Animal:

The following are ways to identify a service animal:

- It is visibly apparent that the employee, volunteer or client requires the animal for reasons relating to a disability
- the employee, volunteer or client provides an identification card
- A letter from a healthcare practitioner, confirming that the employee, volunteer or client requires the animal for reasons relating to a disability

Procedure for Clients and Community members:

Upon entry to CMHAMPS offices:

- Identify the service animal according to the requirements set by AODA
- Document the identification and requirement of service animal in client's file
- Advanced notice is not required but, when possible, it is helpful for planning

Procedure for Employees and Volunteers:

- If an employee or volunteer requires a service animal, a medical note is necessary stating a service animal is required due to a disability.
- If medical documentation is provided, the employee or volunteer will be required to sign a Service Animal Agreement indicating requirements, expectations and guidelines

Risk Management:

- Ensure the animal always remains in the owner's control, this includes being leashed.
- 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.
- If an incident occurs involving the animal, an adverse event report will be completed.
- If there are reported health and safety concerns such as allergies, report concerns to Program Manager or designate for possible accommodations.

(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
Workplace Accommodation policy

Service Animal Agreement

Revision	Date of Approval	Description of Change
	October 2018	
3	April 13, 2021	Formatting / Enhanced Tips / Needs & Rights
4	May 2025	Updated AODA language, include Service Animal agreement, separate employee and client procedures.