



Ambulatory Clinic Policy and Procedure

Title: GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE ANIMALS AND PETS	Policy Number: EP 1.23
Regulation: Americans with Disabilities Act Reference:	Effective Date: 4/2019

Policy Statement:

It is the policy of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC El Paso) to provide guidelines for “service animals” or “pets” on campus.

Scope and Distribution:

This policy applies and will be distributed to all Texas Tech Physicians of El Paso ambulatory clinics.

- A. Title II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 mandate that persons with disabilities accompanied by Service Animals be allowed access with their Service Animals into places of public accommodation, including restaurants, public transportation, schools, and healthcare facilities.
- B. Service Animals are working animals, not pets.
 - 1. Service Animals are dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to: guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, or performing other special tasks.
 - 2. In some cases, miniature horses that have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities will be permitted, consistent with applicable law.
 - 3. Emotional Support Animals or Comfort Animals are often used as part of a medical treatment plan as therapy animals, but they are not considered Service Animals. TTUHSC El Paso will permit Emotional Support Animals or Comfort Animals on a case-by-case basis, consistent with applicable law.
 - 4. Inquiries may not be made about the nature or extent of a person’s disability, but may be made to determine whether an animal qualifies as a Service Animal. When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, the only two permitted questions are: (1) is the dog a Service Animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the animal been trained to perform. An individual or entity may not require documentation, ask that the Service Animal demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task, or require proof of the Service Animal’s training, certification, or license.

Procedure:

- A. General Guidelines
 - 1. Pets are not allowed in the healthcare facility.
 - 2. Service Animals are allowed in the healthcare facility unless the animal’s presence or behavior creates a fundamental alteration in the nature of a facility’s services in a particular area or a direct threat to other persons in a particular area. A direct threat is a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be mitigated or eliminated by modifying policies, practices, or procedures. The determination that a direct threat exists must be made on a case-by-case basis.
 - 3. Service Animals may be excluded from an Operating Room or similar special care areas (e.g. burn units, some ICUs, PE units, and any other area containing equipment critical for life



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support) if the areas are considered to have “restricted access” with regards to the general public. Infection-control measures that dictate limited access include:

- i. The area is required to meet environmental criteria to minimize the risk of disease transmission;
 - ii. Strict attention to hand hygiene and absence of dermatologic conditions; and
 - iii. Barrier protective measures (e.g., using gloves, wearing gowns, and masks) are indicated for persons in the affected space.
4. If the Service Animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it, or if the dog is not housebroken, ask the person with the disability to remove his Service Animal from the premises. Additionally, give the individual with a disability the opportunity to participate in the service, program, or activity without having the Service Animal on the premises.
 5. The Service Animal must have a harness, leash, or other tether, unless the handler is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash, or other tether, or the use of a harness, leash, or other tether would interfere with the Service Animal’s safe, effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the Service Animal must otherwise be under the handler’s control (e.g., voice control, signals, or other effective means.)
 6. The patient or family member must accompany the Service Animal at all times, and the Service Animal must not be allowed to wander and visit other patients.
 7. TTUHSC El Paso staff, faculty, residents, and students are not to touch or give the animal food or treats without the permission of the owner.
 8. The patient/family is responsible for the animal’s needs (e.g., elimination, water).
 9. Bedding from home is not allowed.
 10. In the event the patient is in an emergency situation (e.g., resuscitation); the animal should be removed from the room/treatment area if a Service Animal becomes threatening because of a perceived danger to its handler. Exclusion must be based on actual behavior of the Service Animal, not on speculation of how the Service Animal might behave. This may need to be done by an employee if there is no one with the patient.

B. Guidelines for Service Animals

1. The care of the Service Animal remains the obligation of the person with the disability, not the healthcare staff.
2. A patient with a disability is entitled to independence, which the Service Animal affords them. Therefore, a Service Animal may not be excluded because the Service Animal requires additional care (e.g., taking the animal outside for exercise and elimination).
3. In the event you are asked to take the Service Animal while assisting the individual, hold the leash and not the harness.
4. In the event of an evacuation, always evacuate the animal with the owner. Do not separate them.

C. Infection Control Considerations

1. Employees are required (patient and family encouraged) to wash their hands after contact with the animal.
2. All wounds are to be covered.
3. If the Service Animal has an “accident” while in the facility, request that it be immediately cleaned by the patient/responsible caretaker.



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- i. Offer gloves.
 - ii. Soak up Service Animal urine using paper towels, and pick up the soaked towels or excrement using a plastic bag.
 - iii. Tie and place in the trash.
 - iv. Have the person wash their hands and call Environmental Services.
- D. In the event of an injury to a patient, family member, staff or pet, complete the appropriate Occurrence Report.

Policy Number: EP 1.23	Original Approval Date: 09/2015
Version Number: 2	Revision Date: 4/2019
Signatory approval on file by: Juan Figueroa, M.D. Director of Clinical Operations Clinic Operations Committee, Chair Paul L. Foster School of Medicine	