



## Accessibility - Utilization of a Service Animal

### **POLICY**

The Espanola Regional Hospital and Health Centre (ERHHC) recognizes the requirements set out in the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, (Ontario Regulation, 429/07) of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005, as it pertains to the rights of a disabled person to utilize a Service Animal while accessing care at our hospital site.

### **PROCEDURE**

#### **1. Identifying Service Animals**

Service Animals may be any animal that assists a person with a disability. They provide a wide range of assistance including guiding a person who is blind, alerting a person who is deaf to certain sounds, opening doors and retrieving items for persons with mobility disabilities, emotional support for persons with mental illness, and many other forms of assistance.

Service animals may be identified by any one of the following methods:

- the animal may be wearing a service animal vest, harness or saddle packs
- the animal may be observed providing assistance
- the person may have a letter from a physician or nurse stating that they require the animal for reasons related to a disability
- the person may show a valid identification card or training certificate from a recognized service animal training school.

#### **2. ERHHC's Responsibilities**

Persons with disabilities who are accompanied by a Service Animal will be permitted to enter ERHHC's premises with the animal and keep the animal with them in areas where the public are allowed, which excludes the patient care areas, (as necessitated for infection control reasons), or when the animal is excluded by law. ERHHC will provide notice and explanation to a person accompanied by a Service Animal in relation to this exclusion. Where required, ERHHC will provide alternate assistance in place of the excluded Service Animal, or may suggest providing services in an area where the service animal is permitted, is possible.

#### **3. Responsibilities of Persons with Service Animals**

The responsibilities of the person with the disability accompanied by a Service Animal include:

- a) Keeping the animal in control at all times;
- b) Utilizing the Service Animal in a manner that is not a threat to health and safety of others; and
- c) Keeping the service animal's immunizations up-to-date.

If required, ERHHC will provide notice in the form of a copy of this procedure to the person with disabilities to aid in the comprehension of this practice.

#### **4. Removal of Service Animals from ERHHC's Premises**

In the event that the parameters established by ERHHC for the use of Service Animals while accessing services at ERHHC are breached, service animals may be removed for any one of the following reasons:

- Disruptive or aggressive behavior, such as growling, barking or other signs of threatening or aggressive behavior;
- Causing damage, including causing damage to any person or property;
- Poor health of the animal, such as a contagious illness, where the animal risks spreading the illness to others.

#### **5. Other Possible Considerations**

Service animals may be prohibited from entering certain areas for health and safety reasons or due to law. For example, Ontario Regulation 562 under the Health Protection and Promotion Act states that animals are not permitted in areas where food is prepared, handled, served, displayed, stored, sold, or offered for sale. Other areas may include sterile areas such as a clinical treatment room.

It must be noted that service dogs are exempt from this restriction and are permitted to go where food is served, sold or offered for sale, such as restaurants including buffets. However all animals, including service dogs, are not permitted to enter areas where food is prepared, such as kitchens.

Common allergies or fear of animals are not considered disabilities. As a courtesy, the Hospital may attempt to accommodate persons with common fears and allergies to animals.

In rare circumstances, a person may have a severe and debilitating reaction to an animal, such as respiratory distress. If a situation of this nature occurs, or is reasonably believed to have the possibility of occurring, ERHHC will suggest alternative means of providing care services in this circumstance, taking into account the needs of all parties involved.

#### **6. Agents/Others Providing Goods and Services on Behalf of ERHHC**

Agents and others providing goods and services on behalf of ERHHC will adhere to these practices.

#### **REFERENCES:**

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)
- Ontario Regulation 429/07 - Accessibility Standards For Customer Service
- Ministry of Community and Social Services. (2009, April). *Guide to the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07.*