

Service Animals



Children's
of Alabama®

www.childrensal.org • 205.638.9100

Guidelines for accommodating patients and visitors using service animals. Service animals are defined as animals that are trained to perform tasks for individuals with disabilities. The work or task a service animal performs must be directly related to the person's disability. Animals whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

Policy

Children's recognizes the need for certain persons to be accompanied by a service animal, and shall accommodate this need consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and any applicable Centers for Disease Control guidelines.

- When a service animal accompanies a disabled patient or visitor, the animal will be granted access to all areas of the facility except those noted below.
- The care and behavior of the service animal is the responsibility of the handler. If the animal creates a threat such as growling, howling, barking or blocking the healthcare provider from providing care to the patient, other accommodations will need to be made, including removal from Children's premises.

Procedure

Inpatient/Outpatient Responsibility

- Obtain verbal confirmation from the patient/caregiver that he/she has a disability and that the animal is a service animal.
- A service animal may accompany the patient in any area where health care staff, visitors, and patients are permitted to enter without taking heightened infection control precautions. These areas include the admissions office, the emergency department, inpatient and outpatient rooms, clinics, cafeteria and vending areas, restrooms, and all other areas where visitors are not required to take special infection prevention measures. Staff will inform the patient or family of areas that are off-limits.
- Children's of Alabama may restrict or deny access to the service animal in certain areas when it can be shown that the presence of the animal would create a significant change or direct threat to other persons or to the service provided. These areas include the operating rooms, intensive care units, rooms or units that require special ventilation for high-risk immunocompromised patients, and isolation rooms for patients with airborne infections.
- Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered unless the device interferes with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using the devices.
- Persons should wash their hands with water-less hand cleanser or soap and water after direct contact with the service animal, its equipment, or other items with which the animal has been in contact.

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Service Animal Handler-Responsibility

- Controls the animal and provides the animal with food, water and other necessary care or makes such arrangements through family member, friends, or accompanying person (not including Children's staff). All service animals must be housebroken and biobreaks for the animal are the responsibility of the handler.
- If an inpatient has a service animal, a designated handler must be available at all times to feed and exercise the animal. This designated handler must be provided by the patient.
- The handler must not allow the animal to come in contact with the patient's non-intact skin (surgical site, drainage tube, wounds, IV lines, NG tubes, tracheostomy tubes and/or bedding of a post-op patient, etc.).
- If the service animal urinates or defecates inside the facility, the handler will clean the urine or feces from the floor and then immediately notify Children's staff who will notify Environmental Services or Department Director to clean the area using hospital grade disinfectant.
- Arrangements for the removal of the animal will be made prior to hospitalization to cover unexpected events such as surgery, ICU placement, etc.
- Service animals should never be left alone on Children's premises.

Visitors with Service Animals

- Visitors with a service animal (appropriately restrained) shall be allowed to visit patients. The Infection Control Nurse, at the request of Children's staff, shall review any exceptions.

Emotional Support, Therapy, Comfort, or Companion Animals, & Service Dogs "In Training"

- Not covered by the ADA and not allowed on Children's of Alabama premises.

Definitions

- Disability– An "individual with a disability" means a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one of more major life activities including, but not limited to: walking, talking, seeing, breathing, or hearing.
- Service Animal- Any guide dog, signal dog or small horse individually trained to do work or perform task for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including but not limited to:
 - Guiding individuals with vision impairment
 - Alerting individuals with hearing impairment to sounds
 - Assisting individuals with mobility impairments with balance
- Emotional Support, Therapy, Comfort, or Companion Animals, & Service Dogs "In Training" - Animals that provide comfort just by being with a person.