

SUBJECT: SERVICE ANIMALS	REFERENCE #4088
DEPARTMENT: INFECTION CONTROL	PAGE: 1 OF: 4
APPROVED BY: INFECTION CONTROL COMMITTEE	EFFECTIVE: 7/17/18 REVISED:

**POLICY:**

- Ashley County Medical Center accommodates all persons with disabilities accompanied by service animals, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.
- A service animal is trained to work for the benefit of a person with a disability. Service animals may be guide dogs, hearing or signal dogs, seizure alert cats, etc. A service animal does not have to be a dog or cat and may be another species.
- A service animal is not a pet, as it is specifically trained to assist a person with a disability. Examples of such work includes: guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take a prescribed medication, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. **Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.**
- Verbal confirmation from the patient, or patient’s representative, that he/she has a disability and that the animal is a service animal is sufficient confirmation for Ashley County Medical Center to allow access to its facilities. The ADA does not allow public accommodations, such as hospitals, to require proof of service animal training/certification or proof of disability prior to access to the facility.
  - When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to do. Staff cannot ask about a person’s disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.
- The ADA mandates that service animals be properly harnessed, leashed, or tethered unless these devices interfere with the service animal’s work or the individual’s disability prevents using these devices. In those circumstances, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
- In accordance with Rules and Regulations for Critical Access Hospitals in Arkansas, service animals shall be permitted under the following guidelines:

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- Only animals specifically trained as service animals shall be allowed to enter the facility.
- Service animals shall not be allowed into the facility if they are unhealthy, feverish, or suffer from gastroenteritis, fleas, or skin lesions.
- Healthy, well-groomed animals shall be allowed to enter the facility into areas that are generally accessible to the public (i.e., lobbies, cafeteria, and nurses stations on unrestricted units). The owner of the animal shall be directed to inquire about the possibility of a visit before entering a patient's room. Authorization to visit shall be given by a unit supervisor.
- Service animals shall be walked before entering the facility or shall be diapered in a manner to prevent contamination of the facility environment with excreta. Service animals shall not be fed within the facility.
- Petting or playing with service animals by hospital personnel or patients is prohibited.
- Owners of service animals shall be instructed to wash their hands before having patient contact.
- Visiting with service animals shall be restricted in the following circumstances:
  - The patient is in isolation for respiratory, enteric, or infectious diseases or is in protective isolation;
  - The patient, although not in protective isolation, is immunocompromised or has a roommate that is;
  - The patient is in an intensive care unit, burn unit, or restricted access unit of the hospital;
  - The patient or roommate is allergic to animals or has a severe phobia; and
  - The patient or roommate is psychotic, hallucinating or confused or has an altered perception of reality and is not amenable to rational explanation.
- Animals which become loud, aggressive, or agitated shall be removed from the facility immediately.

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- Ashley County Medical Center may further 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 being provided. Areas that may be restricted include:
  - Operating rooms
  - Rooms/areas with an immunosuppressed patient population
  - Isolation rooms
  - Other areas on a case-by-case basis
- Ashley County Medical Center shall communicate to the patient with a service animal all areas that are off-limits. Communication must be in a manner that is understandable to the patient.
- It shall be the patient's responsibility to make necessary arrangements for the care of the service animal during any time he/she may need to be in an area off-limits to the service animal (i.e., operating room).
- Staff are not required to provide care or food for a service animal.
- A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove their service animal from the premises unless: (1) the animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it or (2) the animal is not housebroken.
- Healthcare staff shall be provided with education by the Infection Prevention and Control Department, including:
  - Definition of service animals
  - Ownership and identification procedures
  - Federal, state and local laws, hospital policies
  - Appropriate interaction with service animals and patients
  - Risk-reduction strategies including:
    - Handwashing

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- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE),
  - Responsibilities of staff and owner for handling and cleaning issues
  - Patient education
- Healthcare staff should wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub after coming into contact with any service animal.
- No special housekeeping methods are required for areas where a service dog has been, unless the area has been contaminated by animal urine, feces, vomit or blood.
- Animal contaminated areas (urine, feces, vomit, blood) shall be cleaned by Environmental Services staff using appropriate PPEs:
  - Urine, feces, vomit and/or blood shall be removed with paper towels and disposed in plastic bag in trash container.
  - The contaminated area shall be cleaned with Ashley County Medical Center's approved disinfectant following manufacturer's directions.

**REFERENCES:**

- Americans With Disabilities Act 28 CFR 36.102 et. Seq. (1990)
- APIC State-of-the-Art Report: (2000). The Implications of Service Animals in Healthcare Settings, *American Journal of Infection Control*, Volume 28, pages170-80.
- Arkansas Department of Health. *Rules and Regulations for Critical Access Hospitals in Arkansas*. Section 7 (F) 2016.