

<b>Chapter:</b>	Technology and Facilities Management		
<b>Title:</b>	Service Animals		
<b>Policy:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Procedure:</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Review Cycle:</b> Triennial <b>Author:</b> Dir. of Ops.	<b>Adopted Date:</b> 10.2023 <b>Review Date:</b> 10.2023	<b>Related Policies:</b> <a href="#">Equal Employment Opportunity Employer</a> <a href="#">Diversity, Equity and Inclusion</a>

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that service animals that accompany clients, staff and visitors with disabilities have public access to Hopeful Horizons' (HHs') facilities, except where the access may present risk to the animal, clients or staff.

**Scope:**

This policy applies to

- All HH Staff                       Selected HH Staff, as specified:  
 HH Board Members               HH Volunteers  
 Other: Clients and Visitors

**Policy:**

In accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and South Carolina law, HH shall allow service animals (including psychiatric service animals) to accompany their handler to any location in a HH building or facility where members of the public or other persons served are permitted. The handler shall be provided with a copy of this policy and must sign an agreement to acknowledge they have received the policy and agree to abide by it.

Pets (not designated as a service animal), emotional support animals (ESA) and/or therapy animals are not permitted in HH facilities.

A. **General Guideline:**

1. When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, the ADA allows only two (2) questions to be asked:
  - Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
  - What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?
 Staff are prohibited from asking the handler:
  - What the handler's disability is
  - To prove their medical condition with documentation
  - To provide identification or certification documentation for the service animal
  - To demonstrate the animal's ability to perform the work or task
2. Individuals with disabilities who use a service animal cannot be isolated from others, treated less favorably, or charged fees that are not charged to other persons without service animals.
3. Whether a service animal, all animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless such a device interferes with the service animal's work or the handler's disability prevents the use of these devices. Service animals are not required to wear a vest, identification tag, or specific harness.
4. Service animals must be housebroken. HH is not responsible for the care, supervision of, or cleaning up after the animal.

5. Handlers are encouraged to vaccinate their service animals in accordance with state and local laws.
6. When there is a legitimate reason to ask that a service animal be removed from a HH building, staff must offer the handler the opportunity to obtain services without the animal's presence and make reasonable accommodations to ensure continued services. Any decision to exclude a service animal shall be made in consultation with the program/department manager/designee. Consideration shall be given to:
  - Objective evidence of the nature, duration, and severity of the risk.
  - Whether reasonable modification of policies, practices or procedures or provisions of auxiliary aids or services could mitigate the risk.

Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service animals. When an allergy is of concern and a person using a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room or different rooms within the facility.

7. HH staff may request accommodation for the use of a service animal through HHs' approved procedure, Reasonable Accommodation Request.

**B. Staff Etiquette and Responsibilities Regarding Service Animals:**

1. Staff shall respect that a service animal is working. Interactions with the animal shall occur at the direction of and with the permission of the handler.
2. Staff shall ensure the handler's confidentiality with respect to the use of a service animal and any associated disability.
3. Staff should not feed service animals.

**C. Handler Responsibilities:**

1. Handlers are responsible for the care and supervision of their service animal at all times.
2. Handlers shall provide all necessary equipment and supplies for the service animal including but not limited to harness, food, bowls, etc.
3. Handlers are responsible to assure their service animal is appropriately toileted including appropriate care and disposal of fecal matter.
4. Handlers are required to manage the service animal in accordance with the general guidelines specified in this policy. Failure to comply may result in the animal being removed from HH facilities.
5. Handlers are financially responsible for any damage to the facilities and/or equipment that is caused by the service animal.
6. If a service animal becomes sick or injured while in HH facilities, the handler is responsible for arranging veterinary care.

**Communication and Training:**

The Board shall receive a copy of the policy at the time of periodic review and will have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions during the approval process. Employees and volunteers shall receive notice of the Board's policy review and approval including notice of any substantive changes. The notice will provide a link to the policy located on the HH website.

**Definitions:**

1. Americans with Disabilities Act: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in everyday activities.
2. Disability: An individual with a disability is defined by the ADA as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.
3. Emotional Support Animals: Animals that provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and help with anxiety, depression, and certain phobias. These animals do not have special training to perform tasks to assist people with disabilities. ESA are not service animals and are not protected under the ADA.
4. Handler: Person in charge of and responsible for the Service Animal or Emotional Support Animal.
5. Pet: A domestic animal kept for pleasure or companionship.
6. Psychiatric Service Dogs: Service dogs that are specifically trained to help people manage mental health condition episodes, distress, triggers, and medication compliance and can aid people with psychiatric disabilities, such as severe depression, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
7. Service Animals: The ADA defines a service animal as a guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to a person with a disability. If they meet this definition, animals are considered service animals under the ADA regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by state or local government.
8. Therapy Animals: Therapy animals go with their owners to volunteer in settings such as schools, hospitals, and nursing homes. From working with a child who is learning to read to visiting a senior in assisted living, therapy dogs and their owners work together as a team to improve the lives of other people. Therapy animals are not service animals.
9. Trained: The ADA provides that a service dog must be trained to do work or perform tasks. In other words, a service animal/ESA cannot be a service animal until it has completed its training. However, a service animal in the process of being trained may be taken into a public place for the purpose of furthering its training.

**Other Related Materials:**

[Reasonable Accommodation Procedure](#)

Service Animal Handler Policy Notice and Acknowledgement of Responsibility and Liability Waiver Agreement

**References/Legal Authority:**

[Americans with Disabilities Act - 2010 Federal Guidance on Service Animals 2020.](#)

[Emotional Support Animal Laws, South Carolina, S. Nelson, 2023.](#)

[South Carolina Code of Laws, Title 31, Chapter 21 31-21-70.](#)

**Change Log:**

Date of Change	Description of Change	Responsible Party
10.2023	This is a new policy.	N. Miller, Prog. Eval. Consultant in consultation with J. Brown, DO