



POLICY

Animal Visitation Policy

9.1.47P

Policies direct required organizational practice/behaviour



island health

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to identify the conditions in which animals will be permitted to visit Island Health care facilities in order to reduce the risk of transmission of infection from animals to humans during the visit.

Context:

Island Health offers programs and services on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw Peoples.

As a signatory to the 2015 Declaration of Commitment to Cultural Safety and Cultural Humility, Island Health is committed to addressing the ongoing impacts of colonialism and Indigenous-specific racism in order to provide a culturally safe, inclusive, healthy and respectful environment.

The organization is committed to strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion to enable excellence in health and care for everyone, everywhere, every time. Through these commitments, Island Health strives to deliver the highest possible standard of care and to promote safe workplaces.

Scope:

- **Audience:**
 - Staff, medical staff and volunteers of Island Health and its subsidiaries;
 - Physicians, dentists, mid-wives and other allied health professionals with an Island Health appointment and privileges or who contract with Island Health who provide care or services on behalf of Island Health;
 - Medical residents; and
 - Students, trainees and educators.
- **Environment:**
 - Island Health-wide.
 - All care settings across the continuum of care.
- **Exceptions:** none

1.0 Policy

1.1 General

Hand Hygiene is one of the most important actions when engaging in animal visitation. All persons working in the facility, handlers, patients/clients, and visitors having contact with the animal must perform hand hygiene:

- Patients/Clients/Staff: Before and after animal contact.
- Handlers: Between rooms and/or between patients/clients.

Animal handlers/pet owners must be in control of the animal at all times.

Staff members and physicians are not permitted to have personal pets accompany them into a health care facility at any time.

Staff members who require a medical accommodation for a certified service animal in the workplace will require approval from Occupational Health and Safety and Infection Prevention and Control.

Animals that become ill during a visit are to be immediately removed from the facility.

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1.2 Exclusions and Limitations

- The following animals are **excluded** from visiting patients/clients inside any facility:
 - Female dogs in season.
 - Animals that have not been litter trained.
 - Animals that have not been house trained.
 - Animals that have been ill in the previous 7-days with vomiting, diarrhea, sneezing, coughing, or discharge from the nose or eyes.
 - Non-human primates, reptiles, amphibians, rodents, farm animals, zoo animals, or birds.
- With the exception of certified guide or certified service animals (see definition below), all other animals, including therapy animals, are **prohibited** to visit:
 - Surgical Units
 - Critical Care Units (ICU,CCU, PICU, NICU)
 - Operating Rooms and Recovery Rooms
 - Dialysis Units
 - Burn Units
 - Labor and Delivery and Mother/Babe Units
 - Laboratories
- No animals, including service animals, are permitted in the following areas:
 - Clean storage
 - Medication preparation
 - Food preparation
 - Cafeteria or dining rooms
- At all acute care facilities:
 - No animals are allowed to reside in the facility.
 - Farm animals may visit outside, within the grounds of the facility, if they are kept in an enclosure.
 - Must not be touched by patients/clients or staff.
 - Farm animals are prohibited from entering the facility.

1.3 Medical Units

- On appropriate Medical Units, visits by therapy animals must be coordinated through the Island Health Volunteer Resources and Engagement Program, and:
 - Must follow the [Animal Visitation Guideline](#).
 - Must have manager approval and shall be reviewed with the Infection Control Practitioner.
 - Are only permitted to visit in private rooms, patient lounges, or designated areas identified in collaboration with the Infection Prevention and Control program.
 - Are prohibited from visiting patients in rooms on additional precautions.
 - The department requesting the visit is responsible to ensure all requirements are met.

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- On appropriate Medical Units, visits by personal pets:
 - Are allowed for compassionate reasons only.
 - Are limited to once per week.
 - Must follow the [Animal Visitation Guideline](#).
 - Must be approved by the unit manager and should be reviewed by the Infection Control Practitioner.
 - Are prohibited from visiting patients in rooms on additional infection prevention and control precautions.
- The visits can be cancelled at the discretion of the Infection Control Practitioner if there are unusual circumstances on the unit, such as an outbreak, presence of multi-drug resistant organisms such as Carbapenemase Producing Organisms (CPO), or an increased number of Clostridium difficile cases.

1.4 Hospice, Long Term Care, Congregate Living and Rehabilitation Units

- Therapy animals and personal pets may be approved for visits.
- Animals are not permitted to reside in the facility.
- All visiting animals must follow the [Animal Visitation Guideline](#).
- Farm animals may visit outside, within the grounds of the facility, if they are kept in an enclosure.
 - Must not be touched by residents/patients/clients or staff.
 - Farm animals are prohibited from entering the facility.

1.5 Ambulatory Clinics, Mental Health and Substance Use Outpatient Clinics, Urgent Primary Care Centers, and Public Health Units

- Patients/clients who request to have a personal pet attend an appointment:
 - Must follow the [Animal Visitation Guideline](#).
 - Must have manager or delegate approval.
 - Require a plan for the visit to be developed in conjunction with Infection Prevention and Control.

1.6 Approval Process and Record of Visit

- Manager or delegate must approve all personal pet visits, before the animal is allowed on the unit.
- The Manager/Clinical Nurse Leader may request the removal of any visiting animals that have not been approved.
- Guide and Service dogs are permitted in Island Health facilities in compliance with [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#). If a Certified Service Dog is required to be with a patient/client at all times, additional planning, and approval is required.
- A record of animal visits must be maintained by the unit or program organizing the visit, as a method to facilitate contact tracing.

1.7 Staff Animal Therapy program

- All staff animal therapy is to be coordinated by the Island Health Volunteer Resource and Engagement program in conjunction with the Infection Prevention and Control Program and the site leadership.

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2.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Site directors, managers, and Volunteer Resources and Engagement staff (where applicable), are responsible for the application of the policy as outlined in this document.
- Infection Prevention and Control is responsible for reviewing and updating this policy.

3.0 Definitions

- **Additional precautions:** Interventions implemented for certain pathogens or clinical presentations in addition to routine infection control practices, to reduce the risk of transmission of microorganisms from patient to patient, patient to health care provider (HCP), and HCP to patient.
- **Certified Service Animal:** an animal that has received appropriate training and has been certified under the [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#) of British Columbia.
- **Clinical Nurse Leader:** direct care unit leader.
- **Guide and Service Animals:** Animals that are certified and regulated under the [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#) of British Columbia. They help people who require assistance to avoid hazards or to perform tasks. The animal must have a certificate from an accredited Assistance Dogs International (ADI), the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), or by schools previously approved by the Ministry of Justice of British Columbia.
- **Island Health Volunteer Resource and Engagement Program:** Program within Island Health that coordinates volunteer support in care areas.
- **Manager:** non contract leader of a care area.
- **Pet:** An animal kept for pleasure or companionship.
- **Therapy Animals:** Also referred to as Animal Therapy Teams. These are organized volunteer programs using screened and trained animals (dogs) and handlers who facilitate interactions between patients and animals to achieve specific physical, social, cognitive and emotional goals.

4.0 Related Island Health Policy Documents

- [Animal Visitation Guideline](#)
- [Hand Hygiene Policy](#)
- [Hand Hygiene Procedure](#)

5.0 References

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6.0 Resources

- Memorandum of Understanding with Volunteer Resources and Engagement and St. John’s Ambulance
- Memorandum of Understanding with Volunteer Resources and Engagement and Pacific Animal Therapy Society
- [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#) (British Columbia, Canada. 2016).
- Island Health [Clostridioides \(Clostridium\) difficile Infection Guideline](#)
- Island Health [Carbapenemase Producing Organisms \(CPO\)](#)

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