

	<p>POLICIES & PROCEDURES</p> <p>Number: 50-30</p> <p>Title: Pet Visitation and Pet Therapy Program</p>
<p>Authorization: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SHR Regional Infection Prevention and Control Executive Committee</p>	<p>Source: Infection Prevention & Control Date Initiated: June 2, 2009 Date Reaffirmed: Date Revised: Scope: SHR Acute Care & Community Based Services</p>

Introduction

Animals have been found to benefit people socially, psychologically, and physiologically. The goal of pet visitation and pet therapy programs are to return the person to wellness and independence by providing opportunities for recreational, motivational, and therapeutic benefits. Animals can transmit infectious diseases to humans and humans can transmit infectious diseases to animals. Service animals are not included in this policy.

Policy

1. The Pet Visitation and Pet Therapy Program Policy will pertain to acute care and community-based services in the Saskatoon Health Region.
2. Health care facilities are to adhere to the Pet Visitation and Pet Therapy Program policy to prevent transmission of infectious diseases.
3. Pets are **not** allowed in areas where food is prepared, stored or served, where supplies, chemicals and/or medications are stored.
4. Pets are **not** allowed in any ICUs, burn units, dialysis units, nurseries, where any procedures are performed and in any isolation rooms.
5. Pets are to be kept away from any toys or medical equipment.
6. Verbal approval must be obtained by the manager/nurse in charge prior to the first animal visit.
7. Vaccinations are to be up to date prior to first animal visit.
8. When there are regular visiting hours, pet visitation will adhere to these times.
9. Therapy animals that visit inside a SHR facility must be registered with Volunteer Services and identified with a SHR photo identification badge for the handler and the pet.
10. Pet is to have all vaccinations up to date and documentation provided to Volunteer Services prior to their first visit in the pet therapy program.
11. All dogs are to be certified and temperament tested by a Certified Pet Dog Trainer or by St. John’s Ambulance.

Purpose

1. To prevent or minimize the transmission of disease from pets in health care settings.
2. To provide a safe environment for people and animals.

Procedure for Pet Visitation

- Practice hand hygiene before and after animal contact.
- Patient, client, friend, or relative provides prior notice to the manager/nurse in charge that they wish to bring a pet to visit.
- The patient-owned animal is to visit that patient only.
- Animal should be healthy and have **all** vaccinations up to date.
- Animal is to be leashed at all times or be transported in a carrier.
- Patient-owned animal is to be under the control of the handler at all times.
- Patient-owned animal should not be handled or petted by non-family members.
- Visiting session is to be for one hour only to reduce animal fatigue.
- Do not put the animal directly onto the bed. Place a disposal impermeable barrier between the bed and the animal. Dispose of this barrier when the visit is finished.
- Suitable animals for visitation only include household pets but do not include the following high risk species:
 - Animals under 1 year old
 - Farm animals
 - Wild animals
 - Animals recently domesticated (e.g. hedgehogs, Potbellied pigs)
 - Recent shelter animals
 - Hamsters, gerbils, mice, rats
 - Birds
 - Reptiles and amphibians
 - Fish

Procedure for Pet Therapy Program

- The manager, staff and security should be advised when the pet therapy program occurs.
- The manager should designate an animal visitation liaison to provide support and facilitation to animal handlers while visiting the facility.
- Obtain oral and written consent from patients/residents to be in pet therapy program.
- Animals in the pet therapy program should be at least one year old and be in good health.
- Animal is not to visit health care facility starting from the onset of and until at least one week beyond the resolution of:
 - Episodes of vomiting or diarrhea
 - Urinary or fecal incontinence
 - Episodes of sneezing or coughing of unknown origin
 - Open wounds
 - Ear infections
 - Skin infections
 - Orthopedic conditions
 - Heat stress
- All animals participating in the pet therapy program must have a yearly check-up and documentation from a veterinarian to verify **all** vaccinations are up to date and animal is healthy.
- All animals should be bathed on a monthly basis and groomed within 24 hours prior to visiting to minimize shedding of animal dander.
- Groom animal to remove loose hair and trim their nails before a visit.

- All dogs are to be certified and temperament tested by a Certified Pet Dog Trainer or by St. John's Ambulance. This evaluation should assess the following situations:
 - Reactions to strangers
 - Reactions to loud noises and/or stimuli
 - Reactions to angry voices and threatening gestures
 - Reactions to being crowded
 - Reactions to being patted in a vigorous or clumsy manner
 - Reactions to a restraining hug
 - Reactions to other animals
 - Ability to follow and obey handler's commands, etc.
- Any animal who exhibits negative, aggressive or fearful behavior is not to be a part of the pet therapy program.
- All animals used in a pet therapy program are to be fed commercially prepared dog food.
- The animals are not to be fed during the visit.
- Fresh water is to be provided by the animal handler for the animal during the visit.
- All animals are to be under the care of a pet handler at all times during the program.
- The animal is to be leashed at all times or in a carrier.
- If the animal urinates or defecates, gloves are to be worn to clean up the animal wastes. Place animal waste into a plastic bag, tie up bag, and place into the garbage. Hand hygiene is to be performed after glove removal. Notify housekeeping to ensure the area is properly cleaned and disinfected.
- The animal handlers should be healthy and free of communicable diseases.
- The animal handler is to ensure all individuals wash their hands before and after animal contact.
- Animal handler should ensure that supplies for hand washing are available where sinks are located and carry dispensers of alcohol hand sanitizer with them for use by all individuals before and after animal contact.
- Animal handler should not visit patients/residents or individuals that have allergies, open wounds, agitation or aggression, fear of animals or are in isolation.
- Animal handler should not allow individuals to touch the animal in the mouth, nose or perianal area or handle the animal in a manner that may frighten or harm the animal.
- Animal handler should not allow the animal to lick individuals, touch any toys, medical equipment or dressings or to contaminate the environment in any way.
- If any toys or medical equipment are contaminated in any way, cleaning and disinfection is to occur prior to reuse (See Policy #50-20 - Toys and Toy Cleaning). All contaminated dressings are to be discarded and new dressings put on.
- If the animal bites or scratches or has any other inappropriate behavior, visitation rights are to be revoked.
- In the case of accidental scratches, put measures in place to prevent this situation from reoccurring.

References:

1. Halvorson K. Infection Control and Animals Service Animals and Pets. (2005). *Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology* 67-1to 67-7.
2. Lefebvre S, Golab G, Christensen E, Castrodale et al (2008). Guidelines for animal-assisted interventions in health care facilities. *AJIC*, 36(2). 78-85.

Number: 50-30

Title: Pet Visitation and Pet Therapy Program

3. Lefebvre S, Waltner-Toews D, Peregrine A, Reid-Smith R, Hodge L, Weese SJ. (2006). Characteristics of programs involving canine visitation of hospitalized people in Ontario. *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology*, 27:754-758.