



		<b>PROCEDURE</b>	
<b>ACCESSIBILITY SERVICE ANIMALS *</b>	<b>Created By*</b> ADMIN		
	<b>Review Required*</b> ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY TEAM		<b>Administrative Approval Required*</b>  Malcolm Hopkins
	<b>Original Procedure Date*</b> September 2009		<b>Revision Date*</b> ANNUAL REVIEW POST ON EXTERNAL/INTERNAL WEBSITE
	<b>Key Words*</b> Disability, handicap, equal access, service animals, dogs, seeing, eye, <i>Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)</i>		

**Purpose\***

St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital is committed to providing accessible customer service to people with disabilities, consistent with the principles of understanding, acceptance, and inclusion.

**Procedure\***

In compliance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Ontario*, (AODA), STEGH recognizes that service animals can play an important and necessary role in fostering the independence of some individuals with disabilities and enables them to access services and supports. Service animals enhance and enrich their quality of life. Consequently, an appropriately trained service animal, under the control of the person with a disability will be welcomed by STEGH and its staff. Service animals are often recognizable as they are wearing a harness or a service vest that alerts the public to the fact that they are working and should be considered “on the job.” Service animals that meet the criteria below will be permitted.

- A. Individuals requiring use of a service animal must demonstrate that the service animal is needed as a reasonable accommodation that is linked to their specific disability. In cases where the disability is not readily apparent or easily perceivable documentation of disability may be requested.
- B. For the purposes of these guidelines a service animal must meet the following criteria:
  - The animal is of a type commonly accepted and trained for performing a task or function for individuals with a disability.
  - The service animal is individually trained to perform a specific task or tasks not instinctual to the animal on behalf of an individual with a disability.
  - Training of the animal is of a type appropriate for the disability.
  - A clear and explicit rationale must exist for the function or service that the animal will fulfill. Examples include a guide dog for the blind, a hearing dog which can alert a deaf individual to important sounds including a ringing telephone or doorbell.
- C. Any animal posing a direct threat to the health or safety others, or exhibiting repeated disruptive behavior, may be denied access to STEGH.

D. If a service animal is under question of criteria, STEGH may request a letter from a physician or nurse confirming it is a required service animal.

### **Departments Affected**

All areas of hospital.

### **Definitions**

**Service animals** are defined as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.

**Guide Dogs** are specifically trained to provide mobility and independence to individuals with visual impairments.

**Hearing Dogs** alert the person to important sounds such as a baby's cry, a knock on the door, a fire or smoke alarm, a ringing telephone or even the presence of an intruder. Often hearing dogs provide the individual with a disability a sense of security and enhance their sense of well-being and personal safety.

**Companion Dogs** often assist families living with autism or support those with specific medical conditions such as seizures, life threatening medical conditions or at times even those with mental illness. These animals are trained to specifically summons help in a crisis.

**Therapy Dogs** are used for the physical or emotional benefit of patients in hospitals, long-term care and rehabilitation facilities. Therapy dogs can improve quality of life, reduce loneliness and depression and enhance cognitive function, mobility and promote recovery and a sense of well-being.

### **References**

Accessibility Customer Service Policy & Procedure

NOTE: For Pet Therapy or Pet Visitation see: CCC Policy REC 4.50 Pet Therapy/Visitation and./or speak to the manager of the area.

### **Read Confirmation\***

Yes  No

Is this a procedure that is mandatory for all individuals to read when it has been initiated or is significant in change & do you require confirmation that it has been read?