

**HACKETTSTOWN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES
ANIMAL VISITATION & PET THERAPY**

Effective Date: 5/1999

Policy No: AD013

Cross Referenced:

Origin: Administration

Reviewed Date: 11/07, 3/09

Authority: Chief Nursing Officer

Revised Date: 8/13

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SCOPE

All departments of Hackettstown Regional Medical Center (HRMC).

PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for animal presence at Hackettstown Regional Medical Center (HRMC).

POLICY

Pet Therapy and animal visitation are available to in-patients in order to provide a more home-like atmosphere and to reduce the stress and anxiety associated with hospitalization.

Visits will not be allowed to patients in the following categories:

- ICU patients;
- Patients on MRSA/VRE or respiratory isolation;
- Neutropenic patients;
- Splenectomized patients;
- Patients whose roommates have pet allergies or fears; and
- Patients whose physician would prefer no animal visitation.

PROCEDURE

Animal Visitation

1. Animals will be allowed in the hospital setting according to the American with Disabilities Act.
2. Service animals, such as Seeing Eye dogs, are excluded from the requirement of this policy.
3. Pets are allowed to visit in the in-patient hospital setting under special circumstances. These visits must be approved in advance by the Administrator or their designee and will be coordinated with the appropriate hospital staff.
4. Animals suitable 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 (ex: hedgehog, pot-bellied pig)
 - Birds
 - Fish

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- Reptiles
 - Hamster, gerbils, mice rats
5. The patient/owner must attest that the pet is in good health and well behaved and not aggressive. The animal must be restrained at all times.
 6. The person escorting the animal will remain with the animal the entire time and will be responsible for keeping the environment clean and sanitary. The pet should only visit their owner and no other patients/visitors.
 7. Roommates of patient must agree that the pet can be in the room.
 8. Visiting time should be limited to no more than 30 minutes.

Pet Therapy Visits

Animals in the pet therapy program should be at least one year old and be in good health.

The animal is not to visit the 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
- Open wounds
- Ear infections
- Skin infections
- Orthopedic conditions
- Episodes of sneezing or coughing of unknown origin
- Heat stress

Animals that participate in the pet therapy program shall be groomed to remove loose hair, and have trim nails before a visit.

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.

The animal handler is to ensure that all individuals wash their hands before and after contact with the animal.

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1. All therapy dogs in the pet therapy program will be certified by an appropriate organization such as Therapy Dog International, Inc. A certified copy of the certificate must accompany the owner's volunteer application.
2. Therapy dogs will only visit those patients who express a desire to participate in the program.
3. Therapy dogs must not pose a threat or nuisance to the patients, staff or visitors because of size, odor, sound, disposition or behavioral characteristics. Aggressive or unprovoked threatening behavior will mandate the pet's immediate removal from the facility, and also removal from the pet therapy program.
4. The dogs must be effectively controlled by leash at all times.
5. The pet therapy dogs will not be exposed to hazardous equipment or materials, or medical equipment.
6. Water will be provided for the dogs when necessary.
7. Sanitary Constraints:
 - a. Therapy dogs are prohibited from the following areas:
 - (1) Food preparation, storage and serving areas with the exception of the participant patient's bedroom;
 - (2) Areas used for the cleaning or storage of human food utensils and dishes;
 - (3) Employees' toilet, shower and dressing rooms;
 - (4) Nursing stations, drug preparation areas, sterile and clean supply rooms;
 - (5) Linen storage areas; and
 - (6) Areas where soiled or contaminated materials are stored;
 - (7) Areas where supplies and/or chemicals are stored.
 - b. Food handlers shall not be involved in canine care, feeding or clean-up of dog waste.
 - c. Therapy dogs must be housebroken. Environmental Services personnel shall be responsible for disposing of their body wastes and disinfecting the area in the event of an accident.
 - d. If a pet therapy dog is requested to lie down on a patient's bed, throw blanket will be used to ensure cleanliness. The blanket shall be removed when the visit is finished.
 - e. Proper and frequent hand washing shall be a requirement of all persons handling dogs or

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their products.

9. Therapy dogs will be examined by their owners for external parasites, vomiting and diarrhea before being brought to the hospital. Dogs found to be infested with external parasites (ticks, fleas or lice), vomiting or have diarrhea are not to be brought to the hospital.
10. Therapy dog owners shall be registered volunteers at HRMC and must “sign in” on Volunteer clipboard at the beginning and end of each visit. Owners must wear the HRMC volunteer uniform jacket and a hospital ID badge.
11. Issues of patient confidentiality must be maintained at all times.
12. When a pet therapy volunteer is questioned about the presence of a dog in the hospital, the volunteer is required to identify himself/herself and dog as participants in HRMC’s Pet Therapy Program.
13. Therapy dogs shall:
 - a. Be restricted to designated areas;
 - b. Maintain current vaccination against canine diseases of distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, para-influenza, parvovirus and rabies. Proof of such vaccinations shall be included on the **certifying company’s** “Annual HR Form” and this copy record kept on file in the Volunteer Office.
 - c. Be determined not to be in estrus;
 - d. Be licensed and wear an identification tag on the collar, choker chain or harness stating the dog’s name, the owner’s name, address and telephone number. The dog’s owner shall be able to produce the ID of the **certifying company**. Dog must wear ID badge.
 - e. The owner shall be liable and responsible for the dog’s behavior and activities as documented in **the certifying company’s** liability insurance policy. A copy of the current policy is kept on file in the Volunteer Office in the dog’s file.

REFERENCES

American Disabilities Act,
Therapy Dogs International, Inc.