 <b>NORTH MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL CENTER</b>	Site: NMMC - Tupelo	Version: 2	Issued Date: Not Set
	Department: Administrative Services		
Title: Pets, Service Animals, and Therapy Animal	Document Owner: Sims, Sherry	Last Review: 04/15/2021	Last Modified: 04/01/2021
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**Rationale:** To provide guidelines for managing pets, Service Animals, and Therapy Animals at North Mississippi Medical Center (“NMMC”)

**Policy:** It is the policy of NMMC that pets, Service Animals, and Therapy Animals should be managed appropriately.


**Definitions:** **Disability.** Means a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity such as caring for one’s self, performing manual tasks, seeing, walking, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and/or working.

**Service Animal.** Means 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 wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.

**Therapy Animals.** General name describing animals that help patients through the use of Animals Assisted Therapy (AAT) or Animal Assisted Activities (AAA). Therapy Animals are not Service Animals and are not necessarily entitled to the same access as Service Animals.

**Procedure:** If an individual presents with a pet, Service Animal, and/or Therapy Animal, the following guidelines should be followed:


1. **General.**
  - a. No individual should be discriminated against on the basis of Disability with respect to access to NMMC facilities. There are specific inclusion and exclusion criteria for AAT and AAA. Therefore, some services may not be appropriate and may not be available to all patients.
  - b. No animals should be permitted access into sterile surgical areas or operation rooms. Any animal may be excluded from patient care areas of the emergency department, labor/delivery areas, maternity/nursing areas, intensive care units and other areas not open to the general public.

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- c. All animals, while on NMMC property, should be restrained on a leash and/or other appropriate restraining device, and such leash/device should be held by and under the control of the animals handler at all times. All persons bringing animals onto NMMC property are responsible for the immediate recovery and disposal of any and all of the animal's excreta.
- d. NMMC does not assume any liability or responsibility for the safety, health, or security of pets, Service Animals, and/or Therapy Animals while at NMMC. This includes circumstances where an NMMC staff might voluntarily undertake temporary supervision of any such animal in order to assist a patient or patient representative(s), as well as the common hazards any such pet, Service Animal, and/or Therapy Animal may be exposed to while at NMMC.
- e. Staff encountering people at NMMC with animals should first inquire whether the animal is a pet. If the answer is yes, advise the person that pets are not allowed on NMMC property. Seek the cooperation of the patient and/or their family or friends in having the pet removed from NMMC. If the individual resists or requests assistance in coordinating alternative arrangements call NMMC Security.
- f. In addition to the above Policies and Procedures, Infection Control should be notified of any animal remaining with an inpatient, as appropriate.

6. **Pets.**

Other than the NMMC Inpatient Hospice unit/floor, pets are generally not permitted at NMMC. Patients or patient representative(s) wishing to bring a pet to the NMMC Inpatient Hospice unit/floor, should seek permission from the nursing supervisor or his/her designee, consistent with the Inpatient Hospice Unit Pet Visitation Policy.

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7. **Service Animals.**

a. Access for people with Service Animals may occur in any area open to the general public. Provisions should be made to permit the Service Animal to accompany the person served, provided that the Service Animal does not create a fundamental alteration in NMMC operations or demonstrate behavior causing a potential safety hazard.

b. If the animal is a Service Animal, inform the person that NMMC will not assume any liability or responsibility for the safety, health or security of Service Animals. Offer assistance in coordinating alternative arrangements for the care of their Service Animal. **(Call the Social Services Department for assistance in placing seeing-eye dogs with the Society of the Blind and placing other Service Animals with appropriate sponsoring agencies.)**


c. Do not ask for proof that the animal is a Service Animal.

d. Do not ask the person to identify their particular disability.

e. Do not touch the Service Animal or the person without first asking permission.

f. NMMC staff should communicate with other departments to which the patient may be transferred or may receive services that the patient may be accompanied by their Service Animal, so that appropriate accommodations can be made as efficiently as possible and to ensure the safety, health and security of patients and the staff.

g. The unit nurse manager, supervisor or designee should meet with the patient to identify patient needs, if any, and coordinate support for the Service Animal. The care and responsibility of the Service Animal should be the patient's, unless the patient has no family, friends, or resources to assist them with the Service Animal's care. Since not all NMMC areas may be open to the general public, there may be occasions during various treatments, procedures, etc.,


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when the patient may not be permitted to be accompanied by his or her Service Animal.

- h. If the patient requires assistance in toileting their Service Animal, the unit nurse manager, supervisor or designee should coordinate assistance, as he or she determines appropriate.
- i. If a Service Animal is out of control or disruptive (e.g. growling, barking, urinating and defecating), then the patient/visitor should be asked to control the Service Animal. If the Service Animal cannot be controlled, then the Service Animal should be removed and/or patient/visitor asked to leave with the Service Animal.

**8. Therapy Animal.**

- a. Infection Prevention Control should be consulted regarding permitted areas for Therapy Animal presence.
- b. The number of Therapy Animals permitted should be one (1) dog per handler.
- c. Therapy Animal handlers should manage the Therapy Animal consistent with NMMC policies and procedures including, but not limited to, the following:
  - 1. Appropriately approach patients by first obtaining patient permission.
  - 2. Ask permission of current elevator riders before entering the elevator.
  - 3. Therapy Animals should not be present while patient is consuming a meal.
  - 4. Therapy Animal handler should terminate a visit if the Therapy Animal exhibits aggressive behaviors including, but not limited to, any one or more of the following:
    - i. Negative and/or aggressive behavior change

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- ii. Excessive barking
  - iii. Allergic response
  - iv. Animal fatigue
  - v. Medical emergency
  - vi. Patient or staff request
  - vii. Exhibits out of control or disruptive behavior including but not limited to growling, barking, urinating and/or defecating.
5. All relevant surfaces, floors, and/or equipment should be properly cleaned after Therapy Animal visits.