

**MONADNOCK COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

Volunteer Services

Page 1 of 3

Reference:

Effective: 11/2017

Replaces: New

Distribution:

Attachments:

**MONADNOCK COMMUNITY HOSPITAL PET THERAPY POLICY**

**POLICY:** Monadnock Community Hospital (MCH) welcomes visits to patients by therapy animals for the purpose of providing emotional comfort and improving patient well-being.

**PURPOSE:** This policy defines the guidelines for a volunteer-based animal therapy visitation program. These guidelines will provide an organized structure for safe, controlled visits to patients by therapy dogs.

**DEFINITION:** Therapeutic Animal: a dog that has been certified/registered through a nationally recognized organization, to have met the requirements of certification/registration through the respective organization (e.g. Alliance of Therapy Dogs or Pet Partners).

**PROCEDURE:**

Therapeutic animal visitation is a volunteer-based service offering “dog visits” in the hospital setting to enhance the environment of care. Each pet handler/owner and his/her therapy dog must be certified/registered by a nationally recognized organization (e.g. Alliance of Therapy Dogs or Pet Partners).

The Volunteer Services Coordinator assures all therapeutic pet handlers/owners are MCH volunteers who have been approved to provide this service. Therapeutic animal visitation volunteers make hospital visits on specified days, scheduled in advance through volunteer services. Visits depend upon the availability of these volunteers and their therapy animals and the willingness of eligible patients.

**GUIDELINES:**

1. It is the responsibility of the Manager of the unit or their designee to screen patients for dog allergies, fear of dogs, clinical concerns, and overall interest in a visit.
  - a. Patients who are on infection “precautions” are not eligible for a therapeutic animal visit
  - b. Therapeutic dog visits should be documented by the nursing staff in the charts of inpatients
  - c. For any other animal visits or pet visitation for patients, please refer to the “Infection Prevention and Animals at MCH Policy” for more information
2. Prior to participating in the program dogs will:
  - a. Have been certified/registered by an approved pet therapy organization (e.g. Alliance of Therapy Dogs or Pet Partners)
  - b. Have received an annual health screen by a licensed veterinarian to include: Appropriate up to date proof of Rabies immunity and others required by local law; an annual physical including negative fecal exam
  - c. Current proof of liability insurance coverage from certifying/registering dog therapy organization. Coverage only applies when the handler works as a volunteer and is not covered if the handler receives pay, wages, or other financial compensation during visits
  - d. Documentation of the annual certification and health screenings is mandatory and will be maintained by the Department of Volunteer Services

**3. Criteria for Therapy Dogs**

- a. Must be at least one year old
- b. Be clean and well groomed
- c. Have short nails with no rough edges
- d. Have clean ears
- e. Be in good health and free of fleas, wounds, or any skin conditions
- f. Be appropriately restrained at all times on a 4 foot or shorter leash held by the handler or contained in a carrier  
Retractable leashes are NOT permitted
- g. Never be left alone with a patient
- h. Be "house broken"
- i. Wear an MCH issued photo ID, bandana or vest as provided by Volunteer Services
- j. May not be hooked or attached to the handler's belt, body, chair, wall or purse or other person. (Dogs visiting in animal-approved strollers may be hooked to stroller, but must not be left unattended by handler)
- k. Dogs must weigh less than 30 pounds to be allowed on patient's beds due to

**4. Criteria For Handlers**

- a. Provide service in a volunteer capacity
- b. The handler and animal must be in good health, free from illness at time of visit
- c. Ask permission before entering a patient's room and before placing a dog on the bed, and to communicate any concerns about the patient or pet visit to the nursing staff
- d. Under no circumstance is it the animal owner/handler's responsibility to attend to the needs of a patient, handlers should inform nursing staff of any patient requests
- e. Prevent the dog from licking any dressings or devices (such as a catheter bag)
- f. Practice good hand hygiene before and after animal contact, including handler, patient and staff
- g. Place a barrier (such as a chuck – provided by the hospital) on bedding if the dog is permitted on the bed. Barriers should be removed at the end of the visit Fresh barriers should be used for each bed
- h. Wear an MCH issued photo ID
- i. Clean up after dog both inside and outside the facility. In the event the dog "eliminates" inside the building the incident must be reported immediately to the Environmental Services Department for appropriate cleaning and disinfecting

**5. Areas Restricted from Pet Therapy Visits**

- a. Precaution/isolation room
  - b. Operating Rooms, Post-Anesthesia Care Unit, Birthing Suite and nursery
  - c. Patient rooms where patient/visitors have allergies or phobias to dogs
  - d. Patient rooms where patients/visitors have altered mental status – who are not appropriate for a visit, or who are agitated or aggressive
  - e. Rooms with patients who have open wounds, burns (unless bandaged), open tracheotomies, infectious diseases, (e.g. MRSA, Strep, etc.) or are on infectious disease precautions
  - f. Food preparation areas; cafeteria, or any food prep areas on patient floors
6. In the event the dog scratches or bites the incident must be immediately reported to the Department of Volunteer Services, an incident report form filled out, and further action taken by the Director of Volunteer Services. (It will be important to obtain information of the person who was bitten or scratched as well as the room number or location within the hospital).
  7. Monadnock Community Hospital reserves the right to terminate any therapeutic animal visit prior to or during the visit based on the best interest of the patients and the facility Pet Therapy dogs may be removed from the Therapy Program if they demonstrate aggressive or threatening behavior (i.e. growling, snarling, curling lips, barking, lunging, or snapping)
  8. Therapy animals should not have an assignment that exceeds two hours and must be given a ten-minute break every 50 minutes

9. Important Note: It is a violation of the NH Criminal Code “to confine an animal in a motor vehicle or other enclosed space in which the temperature is so high or so low as to cause harm to the animal.” On observation or notice of a dog left in a vehicle, MCH Security should be notified. Security will attempt to notify the owner. If the animal appears to be in distress and the owner cannot be reached immediately, Security will notify the Peterborough Police Department to respond and rescue the dog

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Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
                  Chief Nursing Officer

Reviewed on/by: \_\_\_\_\_