



Institutional Handbook of Operating Procedures
Policy 09.03.14

Section: Clinical	Responsible Vice President: Executive Vice President and CEO Health System
Subject: Admission/Discharge/Transfer	Responsible Entity: Health System Operations

I. Title

[Service Animals](#)

II. Policy

- A. Patients with disabilities who bring [service animals](#) with them when they visit UTMB hospital and ambulatory practices/clinics will be reasonably accommodated in compliance with state and federal laws and in compliance with this policy. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), hospitals and other healthcare facilities must allow people with disabilities to bring their [service animals](#) into all areas of the hospital that are open to the public. Animals displaying [unacceptable or threatening behavior](#) or those that may present a threat to others or appear ill will not be allowed to stay with the patient.

- B. If the animal's health is questionable, the animal will not be permitted to accompany the patient without proof of vaccination or the animal's health records. All animals must be on a leash, harness or under their handler's (or designee) control at all times. The care, hygiene, control, and supervision of the animal is the primary responsibility of the patient or the patient's designee including removal of the animal from the premises. If the patient or the patient's designee cannot perform these responsibilities, alternative care for the animal will be arranged in collaboration with patient services, a unit level clinical operations lead, and the patient.

- C. Staff must contact the Clinical Operations Administrator and Patient Services to alert them of the admission of a patient with a [service animal](#) with behavioral or health issues.

- D. Staff reserve the right to ask the owner to remove any service animal that displays aggressive behavior or appears ill.

- E. [Service animals](#) will not routinely be permitted into UTMB areas that are not open to the public, but may be permitted on a case by case review by the respective administrator of that area.

- F. In addition, [service animals](#) may not be permitted in certain areas where they may pose an unreasonable risk to health or safety, such as areas in which special precautions are required, including procedural areas or other areas where exposure to allergens or animal dander presents a risk to patients.

- G. If the patient is immunocompromised, the physician will be consulted before the [service animal](#) is allowed to visit/stay with the patient. If there are other clinical concerns, the attending physician will be consulted.

III. Procedures

- A. Staff will not ask about the nature of the disability, require “proof” of the animal’s training or identification of the person’s disability. When it is not obvious what service a service animal provides, staff may ask two questions:

*Is the animal required because of a disability? and
What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?*

For example, the patient may say it is required for a disability, then you may ask the task and the patient may say “the dog has been trained to pick things up when I drop something” or “the dog has been trained to vigorously lick my face to help me cope with emotional overload.”

- B. Patients bringing service animals should be screened at registration areas or manned lobby entrances by trained staff.
- C. Health care facilities are advised to accept the verbal assurance of the person that he or she has a disability and that the animal is a [service animal](#). If the patient replies that the animal is required due to a disability and can offer the work/task performed, no further questions can be asked.
- D. The animal must be housebroken, well-groomed and appear healthy. Health conditions that would exclude the animal from the hospital include, but are not limited to, gastroenteritis, obvious flea or mite infestation, skin lesions, coughing, or poor grooming.
- E. Exceptions for compassionate care will be considered and visit must be arranged in advance with Nurse Manager, Infection Control and/or Clinical Operations Administrator.
- F. Concerns not addressed in this policy should be directed to the respective area’s direct management, Patient Services, Epidemiology, and after hours to the Clinical Operations Administrator.
- G. Rules for Staff and other Patients:
1. Remember that a [service animal](#) is a working animal.
 2. Do not pet the [service animal](#). This will distract from its work.
 3. Do not feed the [service animal](#) unless the patient gives you permission.
 4. Minimize activities that may startle the [service animal](#).
 5. Do not call the [service animal](#) or try to get the service animal’s attention.
 6. Do not attempt to separate a [service animal](#) from its handler unless it is placed in the care of an accompanying person or kennel when the patient will be incapacitated.

IV. Definitions

Service Animals: Service animals are animals that are individually trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Some of the common tasks performed by service animals are: guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs,

fetching items, and protecting people with documented disabilities. An animal does not have to be licensed or certified as a service animal.

Therapy Animals: Therapy animals have been trained, tested, certified, and insured to work in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and other institutional settings. The therapy animal and its handler visit to cheer patients, to educate the community, to counter grief and stress, and generally act as animal ambassadors within the community. (Please refer to [Epidemiology 01.35 Animal Assisted Therapy](#).)

Companion Animals: Many individuals with disabilities are comforted and emotionally supported by the presence of a therapy animal or a companion animal. Such animals are not service animals.

Unacceptable or threatening animal behavior: These behaviors include, but are not limited to growling, excessive whining, barking, jumping on staff, patients or visitors, hyperactivity, excessive drooling, unkempt hygiene, and inappropriate elimination.

V. Relevant Federal and State Statutes

[Americans with Disabilities Act 1990 and as Amended 2008 \(ADAAA\), 42 U.S.C. 12101, Subchapter II](#)

VI. Related UTMB Policies and Procedures

Epidemiology [Policy 01.35 Animal Assisted Therapy](#)

VII. Additional References

[Service Animals ADA 2010 Revised Requirements](#)

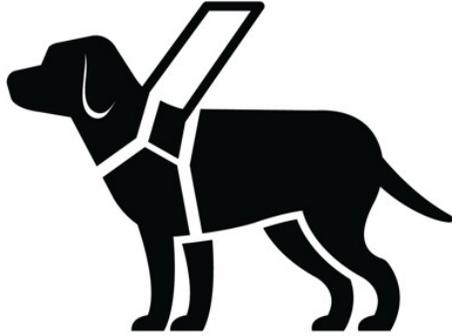
[Service Animals \(hhs.gov\)](#)

Signage, as attached below

VIII. Dates Approved or Amended

<i>Originated: 3/20/2015</i>	
<i>Reviewed with Changes</i>	<i>Reviewed without Changes</i>
07/02/2024	04/10/2018

Signage



The ADA defines **service animal** as:
A DOG that has been trained to
perform a task directly related
to a person's disability.

SERVICE ANIMALS ALLOWED



Scan for more information or visit
<https://www.ada.gov/topics/service-animals>