

HARBOR-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER

SUBJECT: ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPY PROGRAM FOR PEDIATRIC PATIENTS

POLICY NO. 475B

PURPOSE:

To reduce stress through a therapeutic, animal-assisted activity, and to positively influence the emotional state and socialization skills of pediatric patients by giving them the opportunity to have "hands on" experience with animals.

DEFINITIONS:

Animal-Assisted Therapy: A program of visitation by trained therapy dogs that have been authorized by the hospital to visit eligible patients. Only canine volunteers will be used for the Animal-Assisted Therapy Program.

Eligible Patients: Defined in the policy based on their room location, care needs, and willingness to participate.

POLICY:

Harbor-UCLA Medical Center has the following guidelines/procedure to assist all workforce members regarding the Animal-Assisted Therapy Program:

1. Child Life/Handler Responsibilities:
 - a. Child Life Department will clear all volunteer handlers and their dogs prior to participation in the program, provide an orientation, and ensure that handlers review and acknowledge receipt of this policy. Clearance by Employee Health Services is also a prerequisite for starting the visitations.
 - b. Child Life will be responsible for conducting the training of clinical staff, and will be the hospital liaison for support and facilitation of the animal-assisted therapy visits.
 - c. Child Life will maintain a log of all animal-assisted activities, including rooms and persons visited for potential contact tracing. If an animal is found to have an active infection or is epidemiologically linked to an infection or outbreak, that animal should be removed from the facility until examined and cleared by a veterinarian. Child Life will notify Infection Prevention and Control if such an event occurs.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 5/16

SUPERSEDES:

REVISED: 3/19

REVIEWED: 3/19

REVIEWED COMMITTEE: Infection Prevention & Control Comm.

APPROVED BY: 
 Kim McKenzie, RN, MSN, CPHQ
 Chief Executive Officer


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 Chief Medical Officer


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- d. Handlers will keep the volunteer dog on a leash that is non-retractable, and no more than 4-6 feet in length.
 - e. Visits shall be limited to one animal per handler.
 - f. Verbal permission should be obtained from other occupants/patients/parents or guardians before entering elevators or multi-patient rooms.
 - g. Toileting of the animal must be managed by the handler. If soiling of the environment occurs, the handler will clean up small spills using gloves and plastic bag for disposal in the regular trash. The area should be cleaned using the hospital-approved disinfectant. Environmental Services (EVS) can be contacted for additional assistance in cleaning the area, if needed. If a soiling incident occurs on a patient or patient bedding, the patient's nurse should be contacted for assistance in getting clean linen for the patient. Hand hygiene must be performed immediately following any clean-up or handling of any animal.
 - h. Therapy dogs will wear an ID badge with photo, preferably of dog and handler.
 - i. The animal must never be left alone with any patient, family, or staff member.
 - j. Routine cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces must be conducted after the visit has concluded.
2. Infection Control Specific to Dogs:
- a. Dogs must be registered or certified for animal-assisted therapy, have been assessed for proper temperament and behavior, be at least 1 year old, and have been in a permanent home at least 6 months.
 - b. Yearly health screening from a veterinarian is required and vaccinations must be up-to-date. Records are to be kept on file in the Volunteer and Child Life offices.
 - c. Absence of oral and skin lesions.
 - d. Absence of acute illness such as vomiting, diarrhea, sneezing, or coughing.
 - e. If the animal develops any signs of illness or behavioral changes, it may not participate in the program until it has been evaluated and cleared by a veterinarian.
 - f. The dog must be bathed and groomed within 24 hours of visiting the hospital, have clean ears, and trimmed nails with no rough edges.
 - g. Dogs with longer hair may require use of a jacket or vest to limit dispersal of hair into the environment.
 - h. Routine cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces must be conducted after the visit has concluded.
3. Patient Eligibility:
- a. Dogs may visit patient rooms, playrooms, Teen Lounge, Child Life playground.
 - b. Dogs MAY NOT visit:
 - 1. Intensive Care Units (*Exceptions may be made upon specific written order of Attending Physician or PICU Fellow/Resident*).
 - 2. Neonatal or newborn nurseries.
 - 3. Food serving areas, clean and sterile supply areas, medication storage areas, linen storage, Pharmacy, Laboratory, operative or post-operative areas.
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4. Any patient on any form of transmission-based precautions (Contact, Droplet, or Airborne) or in a treatment room.
 5. Any patient who is having a procedure done in the room.
 6. Any patients who is here as a result of a dog/animal bite.
 7. Any patient who has an allergy to, or phobia of dogs.

PROCEDURE:

I. Criteria for the Animals:

1. Therapy dog visit scheduling:
 - a. Child Life Department shall coordinate all arrangements for pet therapy visits.
 - b. Child Life will review requests, arrange visits, escort handler/dog teams, or notify the unit or patient if ineligible for a visit.
2. Trained handlers and their animals are allowed in the facility, with the exception of those areas where the presence of the animal would pose a health/infection control risk or where the animal's presence or behavior creates a fundamental alteration in the nature of the hospital's services or poses a direct threat to other persons.
3. Animal-assisted therapy should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether reasonable modifications in policies and procedures will mitigate the safety risk.
4. The care or supervision of a therapy animal is the responsibility of the trained animal-assisted therapy volunteer, not the facility or its staff.
5. The therapy animal should not be fed in the hospital.
6. The therapy animal should eliminate outside the building, and picked-up by the handler. Proper hand hygiene must be performed immediately following any clean up.
7. Care and behavior management of the therapy animal and any clean up that may be necessary remains the obligation of the owner or trained animal-assisted therapy volunteer, not the healthcare staff.
8. Contact with animal saliva, dander, urine, and feces should be avoided. Handler should discourage dog from licking patient or any item in patient's environment.
9. Each patient, visitor, or staff member must perform hand hygiene prior to and immediately after the pet visit.
10. If a dog is placed on a patient's lap or on the bed, a sheet should be placed over the area to limit exposure to hairs that may be shed in the environment, and removed after the dog visit.
11. Contact with any invasive devices, equipment, or dressings must be avoided.
12. Therapy dog visits should not be scheduled during meal times, and dogs will be removed from any area where food is being served.
13. If an incident of biting or scratching, or any aggressive behavior by a pet therapy dog occurs:
 - a. The animal should be permanently removed from the facility.
 - b. The incident should be reported promptly to the unit supervisor and physician, and a Safety Intelligence (SI) report completed by Child Life.
 - c. Scratches, bites, or other breaks in skin should be cleaned and treated immediately.

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II. Criteria for Patient:

1. Patients will be eligible based on the assessment of medical staff, along with verbal and written consent of the parent/guardian, and documentation of consent in the medical record by Child Life. Hospitalized children with the following ailments will be excluded from participating in the Animal-Assisted Therapy Program:
 - a. Open sores/wounds on exposed areas of skin
 - b. Exhibiting aggressive or fearful behavior
 - c. Transmission-based precautions (Contact, Airborne or Droplet)
 - d. Allergies to animal dander
 - e. Asthma, cystic fibrosis, or open tracheostomy

REFERENCES:

Darling, K. (2009). Animals visiting healthcare facilities, in Association for Professional in Infection Control and Epidemiology (Eds.), *APIC text of infection control and epidemiology* (pp 68.1-68.8). Washington D.C. Epidemiology/Infection Prevention Long Beach Memorial Medical Center Policies and Procedures; Policy/Procedure: 14.14 Section: 14.0 – APPENDIX

Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center Pet Therapy - Policies and Procedures Manual

Rekha M., et al. (2015). Animals in healthcare facilities: Recommendations to minimize potential risks. *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*. Available on CJO 2015 doi:10.1017/ice.2015.15.

Weber, D. (2015). Infection control experts outline guidance for animal visitations in hospitals. *Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America*. Retrieved from <http://www.shea-online.org/View/ArticleId/342/Infection-Control-Experts-Outline-Guidance-for-Animal-Visitations-in-Hospitals.aspx>