



**LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
HARBOR-UCLA MEDICAL CENTER**

SUBJECT: COMPANION AND CUDDLER PROGRAM FOR PEDIATRIC UNITS POLICY NO. 304B

CATEGORY: Provision of Care	EFFECTIVE DATE: 12/17
POLICY CONTACT: Lynne Smith, MD	UPDATE/REVISION DATE: 11/21
REVIEWED BY COMMITTEE(S): Pediatric Acute and Critical Care Committee	

PURPOSE:

To provide support to parents, guardians, and patient’s caregivers who are not able to be at their child’s bedside by providing comfort and the benefits of interaction to their child. This service is provided by a volunteer “Cuddler”.

DEFINITIONS:

Infants: Children under 12 months old.

Older Children: Children greater than 12 months old and less than 18 years old.

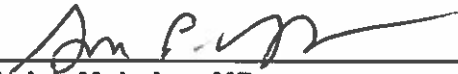
Companion and Cuddler Volunteer: The “Cuddler” volunteer assists nursing staff with supplementary services which are not part of the child’s medical treatment. The Cuddler adds to the well-being and comfort of the child in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU), Level II Nursery, Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU), Pediatric Step-Down Unit, and Pediatric Ward. While outcomes associated with volunteer cuddling programs have not been extensively studied, the benefits of cuddling infants are strongly supported by evidence. The Cuddler’s services help to maintain the continuity of care by freeing Nursing personnel to perform vital services.


POLICY:

1. Cuddler services are available to all Pediatric patients under 18 years old at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center (HUCLA).
2. Parents and guardians are provided with an option to ‘opt out’ of the program. If the parent(s) or guardian(s) choose to opt out, this will be noted in the child’s electronic medical record by the primary nurse and the Charge Nurse will be informed.
3. Cuddler services can be used for older children to provide support in the form of age-appropriate play and recreational activities or other activities which normalize the hospital environment.
4. An admission packet for the various pediatric units will inform parents and guardians of HUCLA’s Cuddler Program and that they may request to ‘opt out’ of this service.

REVISED: 12/17, 11/21
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APPROVED BY:


Anish Mahajan, MD
Chief Executive Officer


Anish Mahajan, MD
Chief Medical Officer


Jason Black, MBA, DNP, RN
Chief Nursing Officer



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5. In addition to the standard requirements of the Volunteer Department, Cuddler volunteers will complete additional training specific to the various units where Cuddler Services are provided [NICU, Level II Nursery, PICU, Pediatric Step-Down Unit, and Pediatric Ward]. Upon completion of this additional training, the volunteer will receive a certificate of completion which will be filed in their Volunteer Office area file.
6. The Cuddler volunteers, while providing services, will be under the direct supervision of the patient's nurse to ensure adherence to infection control and safety standards.
 - All Cuddlers/companions must be fully vaccinated including COVID and influenza, and follow all public health guidelines.

PROCEDURE:

Staff Requests:

1. Doctors, Nurses, Social Workers or ancillary staff may verbally inform the Charge Nurse of any request for Cuddling services for infants or children.
2. When the Cuddler Volunteer arrives at each unit, they will check-in with the Charge Nurse to see where their services are needed (see below).

Cuddler Volunteers:

1. After signing in with the Volunteer Office volunteers will check with the Charge Nurse in the various pediatric units.
2. The Charge Nurse will inform the volunteer of any infant or child that would benefit from their service.
 - a. Services for infants will take priority.
 - b. If services are not needed for infants, the volunteer may choose to provide their services to older children.

REFERENCE:

Policy 600 Nursing Policy Manual: Volunteer Services

AAP Article: "About Skin-to-Skin Care" 11/21/2015

AAP Article: "Study Finds Holding Low Birth Weight Newborns Skin to Skin Kangaroo Style Reduces Mortality Rates by 36 Percent: 12/22/15

Reviewed and approved by:

Medical Executive Committee on date 11/2021

Beverley A. Petrie, M.D.

President, Professional Staff Association