

USE OF SERVICE ANIMALS

I. CHANGES: VI: Specifies what animals that can be considered service animals in CTVHCS facilities. VIII: Clarifies employees' and individuals' with service animals' responsibilities. Provides instructions for staff if they have questions about a service animal. Provides guidelines for allowing service animals on residential care units. Attachment A, B, and C added.

II. RESCISSION: Memorandum 00-057-10, dated November 7, 2011.

III. NEXT REVIEW DATE: October 2017

IV. AFFECTED SERVICES: All services and disciplines.

V. PURPOSE: To establish and define the policy regarding the use of service animals.

VI. DEFINITION: "Service animal" are any dog or miniature horse as legally defined by current American with Disabilities Act criteria that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals who are blind or have low vision, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, fetching items, assisting an individual during a seizure, retrieving medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and assisting individuals, including those with cognitive disabilities, with navigation. A service animal is NOT a pet. Many disabling conditions are invisible. Therefore, every person who is accompanied by a service animal may not "look" disabled.

VII. POLICY: It is the policy of this medical center that every effort will be made to accommodate the special needs of individuals requiring the use of trained guide dogs or service animals. Service animals are permitted to accompany individuals to all areas of CTVHCS facilities and property on the same terms and conditions, and subject to the same regulations, as generally govern the admission of the public to the property. Every effort will be taken to ensure a hazardous-free, healthy environment for both patients and therapy animals.

VIII. PROCEDURES:

A. A service animal functions as an aid to disabled individuals. Disabled patients, visitors, and employees are to be permitted to use trained service animals in this medical center in all situations except where it can be demonstrated that this poses a significant health risk, or where the animal exhibits disruptive behavior.

B. This policy is restricted to trained guide, and service animals which have been maintained as such by their owners. Animals whose primary function is that of a pet are not recognized as acceptable service animals. Therapy animals, companion animals, emotional support animals, and pets are not

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considered service animals, and their access to VHA facilities and properties are not covered by this directive.

Service animals in training are not allowed on CTVHCS property. Individuals may ask if an animal is a service animal, or ask what tasks the animal has been trained to perform. Service animals do not require special ID cards. Individuals are reminded that an employee/customer's disability is private and should be kept confidential.

C. Service animals are not permitted to run free or roam in CTVHCS buildings or on CTVHCS property. The service animal must be in a guiding harness, or on a leash, and under control at all times which in CTVHCS buildings or property. The owner/handler must carry elimination supplies and is responsible for cleanup of animal wastes. Animals that urinate or defecate on floors or hospital equipment can be permanently barred from the premises. Attachment A further clarifies owners' responsibility and animal behavioral requirements. Service animals are allowed in residential programs if the animal meets service animal criteria and the owner signs and abides by Attachment B. .

D. Service animals who are poorly controlled, or whose owners demonstrate an inability to care for their basic needs, may be excluded or restricted from the medical center. VA police should be notified if staff have questions about an animal. (Attachment C). If owners are unable to remove the animal VA Police will be called to retrieve the animal and hold for collection by local Animal control. A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises except in the following situations and areas:

1. The animal is out of control and the animal's owner does not take effective action to control it;
2. The animal poses a DIRECT threat to the health or safety of others. The determination of a direct threat or safety MUST be based upon medical or other evidence; not on stereotype or conjecture. The Infection Control Practitioner may be contacted to ensure that proper infection control procedures are followed. Animals found to be infected with external parasites (ticks, fleas, or lice) or which vomit or have diarrhea, must be immediately removed from the premises;
3. Service animals will not be allowed to enter rooms of patients in operating rooms, intensive care units, food preparation and storage areas, food dining areas (except when a service animal is assisting a person), medication preparation and dispensing areas, sterile and clean supply areas, linen storage areas, renal dialysis, or areas where soiled and/or contaminated material are stored, including medical laboratories; Special permission needs to be sought for animals of owners who are placed under any type of infection control precautions, or isolation rooms from Infection Prevention and Control staff before placing the pet in the room.
4. Service animals may be restricted from rooms of patients who have allergic reactions to animals, or who have fears or phobias about animals. Visitors using service animals should be afforded alternate arrangements for visitation when this situation exists;

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5. Service animals staying with in-patients will be individually evaluated;

6. Situations or areas not indicated above may be excluded with justification by qualified medical personnel.

D. The care, handling, and monitoring of any service animal brought into the medical center is the responsibility of the handler and not that of medical center staff.

E. Employees with disabilities requiring the use of service animals will be accommodated to the fullest extent possible. Considerations will be given to the nature of the position, the work area in the medical center, and the potential risk to themselves and others.

IX. RESPONSIBILITIES: Service Chiefs and supervisors have overall responsibility for the administration of this policy.

X. REFERENCES: VHA Directive 2011-013, Title 40 United State Code 3103, Title 38 CFR 1.218 and Americans with Disabilities Act.

Sallie A. Houser-Hanfelder, FACHE  
Director

MSEC Approved:

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**Attachment A Definitions**

**Service Dog:** These dogs are specially trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a **disability who cannot perform the work or task independently of the dog.** The work or tasks performed by the service dog must be directly related to the individual's disability, and the service provided by the dog must compensate for or mitigate the disability that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the individual. Examples of Service Dogs: Visual Assistance, Hearing Dog for the Deaf, Mobility Assistance, Wheelchair Assistance, Assisting an individual during a seizure and PTSD Service Animal

**At-Risk Behavior:** Unacceptable behavioral traits **are not limited to but** include any aggressive behavior toward people or other dogs: tugs at leash and doesn't remain at owner's side, snapping, whining, snarling, growling, barking, licking, chewing, biting, scratching, jumping, lunging, or approaching other individuals without invitation.

**Owners/Handlers** are responsible for: The care and control of the dog at all times; Ensuring that the dog is taken into permitted areas only, complies with behavior guidelines, meets dog hygiene requirements, and is in good health; Ensuring that animals are not left unattended in vehicles during extremely hot or cold weather when there may be a significant health risk to the animal; ensuring the animal has all inoculations recommended for the species and has a current rabies vaccination. ;Addressing any damage that occurs as a result of their service dog's presence on CTVHCS property; and Immediately removing from the facility any dog that displays at risk behavior or that places an individual(s) at risk.

**Behavioral Requirements:** Service dogs brought to the facility must display behavior consistent with service dog training. Incidents of disruptive or potentially dangerous dog behavior will be reported to CTVHCS Police or supervisory staff immediately. At a minimum, expected behavior skills: Remains on leash at the handler's side; Works calmly on leash; Does not pull toward other animals or initiate interaction with others; Remains calm when walking through a crowd, is bumped, or strangers attempt to pet; Maintains neutral reaction to another animal; Remains calm if handler leaves the dogs sight and hearing, in the event of a medical emergency; Does not solicit food or petting from other people while on duty; Does not sniff personal belongings or people or intrude into another dog's space while on duty; Socially tolerates strange sights, sounds, odors, etc. in a wide variety of public settings; Ignores food on the floor or dropped in the dog's vicinity while working outside the home; Does not urinate or defecate in public unless given a specific command or signal to toilet in an appropriate place; and Does not display unruly behavior or unnecessary vocalizations in public settings. This disruptive behavior is an indication that the dog has not been successfully trained to function as a service dog in public settings.

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**Attachment B**

**SERVICE ANIMAL PROGRAM AGREEMENT**

1. I attest that my service animal is non-aggressive, and is a suitable animal to bring into a medical care facility. My animal will meet the criteria described in the attachment to this agreement.
2. I will, at all times, present my service animal in a clean, dry, groomed and healthy manner. I will keep my service animal free of internal and external parasites.
3. I will assure that my service animal maintains an updated record of all inoculations recommended for its species and has a current rabies vaccination. I understand that I must furnish proof of this and keep on file with \_\_\_\_\_.
4. I will maintain control over my service animal at all times, and I consider my service animal to be reliable even when exposed to situations such as wheelchairs and people with unusual motions.
5. I agree to follow rules and guidelines set forth above as conditions for participation in the \_\_\_\_\_ Program and:
  - a. I will report to staff upon arrival to the unit and will cooperate with staff.
  - b. I will have my service animal on a leash or crated at all times to insure the safety of all patients and staff. Service animals are not to be separated from me unless permission is granted.
  - c. I will be responsible for the clean and disposal of my service animal's waste products. I will always carry equipment sufficient to clean up the animal's feces whenever the animal is on CTVHCS property. Should a service animal relieve itself inside the medical center, I will remove bulk or liquid waste, placing it in a plastic bag for disposal. Environmental Management Service's housekeeping aid assigned to that area will be notified for final cleaning and sterilization of soiled area.
  - d. I understand that service animals will not be allowed in kitchen or food preparation areas. They are welcome in the dining room. Service animals are not to be fed unless directed by me and only food provided by the me. Food from CTVHCS nutrition and food service is not to be fed to service animals.
  - h. I understand staff, volunteers, visitors and patients are discouraged from interacting with working service animals. Petting service animals when they are working distracts them from their task at hand. Service animals who's primary function is that of a pet is not recognized as an acceptable service animal and is not permitted.
  - f. I understand if my service animal has to be taken outside building closure, only one person can accompany him.
  - g. I understand that if my service animal barks, growls, or otherwise acts out of control it may result in the exclusion of the animal from the \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

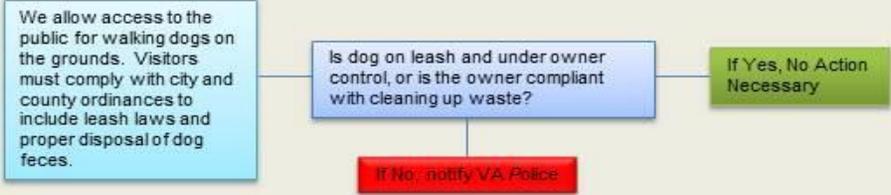
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Enclosed: Service Animal Definitions.

### CTVHCS VHA SERVICE ANIMAL DECISION TREE

#### Question 1: What do you do if you see dogs on VA grounds?

\*VA Police  
\*Austin: 54535  
\*Temple: 44911  
\*Waco: 53911



#### Question 2: What do you do if you see an animal inside VA facilities?

