	TITLE Pet Visitation		
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Pet Visitation

POLICY:

Erie Shores HealthCare (ESHC) recognizes the importance and value a pet contributes to the well-being and mental health of its owner or those who interact with pets, and when controlled appropriately, the benefits can outweigh the risk of zoonotic transmission. Some restrictions will be applied for pet visitation in the acute care setting. Animals can be a source of infection transmittable to humans through parasites, fungus or bacteria. Infections such as MRSA seen in humans may be transmitted to an animal, which can then transmit the infection to other humans.

A balance will be sought to mitigate the risk of transmission of pathogens from animals to humans, while providing the therapeutic benefit of animal interaction, in keeping with the goal of a home-like environment. **Dogs** are the only personal pets permitted for pet visitation.

PURPOSE:

To prevent spread of potentially infectious organisms from visiting animals in the acute care setting.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all ESHC staff who received requests for personal pet visitation.

The exception is the **Operating Rooms**, where pet visitation is not supported due to possible exposure risk to fresh post-operative patients.

These guidelines do not refer to the Pet Visitation Dogs registered through the Department of Volunteer Services and Student Registration.

This policy does not refer to Service Animals accompanying patients to hospital appointments.

DEFINITIONS:


Personal pet: pet belonging to the patient; excludes service animals and pet therapy.

PROCESS:

The Manager or delegate of the area where patients are requesting personal pet visitation are responsible for ensuring the steps below are followed, and shall monitor compliance with the policy. The Manager or delegate has the authority to set additional conditions to those set out in this guidelines (such as, number of pets permitted on the unit / in facility at any one time, length of time of visit, location of visits, etc.). Consideration and accommodation must be given to any patients who experience allergies to animal dander or hair, and the level of risk that animals may present, who are also being accommodated on the same unit.

Any staff working in the facility, who observes that the visiting pet does not meet the requirements of this policy, has the authority to ask that the pet be removed immediately.

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General

1. Staff members, physicians, and persons working or visiting at or in facilities are not permitted to have personal pets accompany them, at any time.
2. All personal family pets must have up to date vaccinations, be free of parasites and fleas, and have no open sores, wounds, or lesions. NOTE: The Manager or delegate shall request to see proof of vaccination.
3. Visiting pets must be under the control of their owners at all times. Pets are not permitted on or in beds.
4. Female dogs in season are not permitted to visit.
5. During influenza or other infectious disease outbreak, there will be no animal visitation.

Personal Family Pets

1. To help accommodate personal family pet's visitation, patient / family members are asked to fill out a "**Personal Family Pets Form**" prior to the visitation.
2. The forms will be available on the Patient Unit..
3. The Unit Manager will need to approve the visitation. Managers should consider the situation of the patient - i.e. is the patient palliative? or admitted long term? before approving the visit.
4. Visiting animals must be on leash or in pet carrying case, and under the "care and control" of their owners at all times. Owners assume all responsibility for the conduct of their pet.
5. Visiting personal pets can visit in private rooms, dedicated animal visiting room, or outside of the building. NOTE: Consideration must be given to any patient who has allergies to animals.
6. Pet visits are not permitted on the Neurosurgery unit and in the Operating Rooms. Pet visits may be accommodated in special circumstances in other areas including the critical care units on a case by case basis, with approval and accommodations made by the unit manager or delegate.
7. Visiting personal pets are not allowed in food preparation areas or in common areas, such as dining rooms, at any time.
8. Visiting personal pets are only to visit the patient that requested the visit. Interaction with other patients should not be encouraged.
9. The owner of the animal and the patient must wash their hands with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer, before and after handling the animal.
10. The owner must be responsible for the needs of the pet (food, water, outdoor breaks, and picking up after pet).

REFERENCES:

1. Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology. (2018). *APIC Text of Infection Control & Epidemiology* (online ed.). Washington, DC
2. Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee (2012). *Routine Practices and Additional Precautions in All Health Care Settings*. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, Public Health Ontario. Retrieved November 20th, 2013 from: http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/RPAP_All_Health_care_Settings_Eng2012.pdf

Approval Process

Date

Infection Control Care Team

March 2019

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