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<b>Approval Date</b>	<i>July 19, 2022</i>
<b>Revision Date</b>	<i>April 2013, May 18, 2022</i>
<b>Approved by</b>	<i>Andree Robichaud, CEO</i>
<b>Approver Signature</b>	
<b>Scheduled Review Date</b>	<i>July 2025</i>
<b>Cross- Reference</b>	<i>This policy replaces: Pet Visitation Policy, approved April 2013.</i>

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is:


- to support client-centered care through pet therapy and personal pet visits which research has shown to benefit clients socially, psychologically, and physiologically;
- to ensure infection prevention and control protocols are in place to prevent the introduction or spread of infection to clients, employees and other affiliated individuals from animals that enter Central Health facilities;
- to provide guidance and education to employees/affiliated individuals, clients and visitors on the process for safe personal pet visitation and pet therapy; and
- to ensure the safety of clients, visitors and employees/affiliated individuals during personal pet visits and pet therapy.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all Central Health employees and affiliated individuals working or performing specific tasks in Central Health acute and long-term care facilities interfacing with personal pet visitation and pet therapy activities.

This policy applies to the St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog program operated within Central Health.

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This policy applies to inpatient client visitation by an individual's personal pet(s) as defined by this policy.

This policy does not apply to Service Animals, as defined by the *Service Animal Act*, at any Central Health site or facility.


## DEFINITIONS

<b>Affiliated Individual</b>	Individuals who are not employed by Central Health, but perform specific tasks at or for the organization, including, but not limited to, trustees, students, volunteers, pastoral care, researchers, contractors, vendors and individuals working at the organization.
<b>Client</b>	A person who avails of the services of an authority, and includes a client, patient and/or resident.
<b>Handler</b>	A St. John Ambulance Volunteer who brings their approved Therapy Dog to a Central Health facility for pet therapy in designated approved locations or an individual who brings a personal pet to a Central Health facility for the purpose of a personal pet visit with a client.
<b>Pet Therapy</b>	A formal program through St. John Ambulance that focuses on facilitating therapeutic interactions between Therapy Dogs and clients.
<b>Personal Pet Visit</b>	Personal pet visits refer to cats and dogs that may be brought in to visit individual clients.
<b>Therapy Dog</b>	A St. John Ambulance approved Therapy Dog intended for recreational visitations to designated areas under the guidance of its handler.

## POLICY STATEMENT(S)

Central Health may support and facilitate personal pet visitation and pet therapy in certain circumstances as described in this policy and recognizes the value and therapeutic benefit of animal visits.

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The designated care team or manager must ensure the safety of all clients, employees, affiliated individuals, and visitors when personal pet visitation and pet therapy occurs at Central Health sites or facilities.

Central Health permits personal pet visitation based on individual client requests, expressed wishes and therapeutic benefit. The following factors may be considered by the care team or designate when approving personal pet visitation:

- Client's length of stay;
- Client's location;
- Health status of client;
- Employee/client allergies;
- Employee/client comfort level;
- Client consent.

All requests from a client or their family for personal pet visitation or for pet therapy must be reviewed by Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC), when possible, in consultation with the clinical area making the request. If consultation with IPAC is not possible, the Nursing/ Facility Manager or designate must be consulted. Requests are assessed on an individual basis and in consideration of the health and safety of the clients and affiliated individuals.


To ensure client and employee safety and wellbeing, any pet visitation must not occur if the handler or animal has any of the following symptoms:

- Episodes of vomiting and diarrhea;
- Episodes of sneezing or coughing (of unknown or suspected infectious origin);
- Treatment with antimicrobials or any immunosuppressive doses of medications;
- Ear infections; or
- Skin infections.

Personal pet and pet therapy visitation may occur at bedside and other designated visitation areas, except for the following:

- Isolation rooms;
- Emergency department and Intensive Care Unit (pet visitation may be approved in extenuating circumstances where approved by the care team);
- Procedure areas, including operating, labor/delivery, and pre-post-op recovery;

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- A room with an immunosuppressed client or rooms of clients with animal allergies or other risk or safety factors.

Personal pet visitation must be scheduled around the client’s treatments and mealtimes and takes place in a designated, private setting (e.g. family room or conference room) free of other clients. If visitation must occur in a multi person room, verbal permission from all clients in the room must occur and be documented in nursing notes.

A personal pet visitation or pet therapy session must be discontinued immediately if any safety or risk factor is identified or occurs within any Central Health site or facility, including though not limited to the disruption of clinical care for any individual, inconvenience for the care team or any other individual, disruptive or negative behavior of the pet, etc. Personal pets or therapy/certified dogs who exhibit aggressive or threatening behavior must be immediately removed from the Central Health facility.

### **Personal Pet Visitation**

Personal pet visitation is limited to domesticated cats and dogs. Other animals may be considered on a case by case basis in consultation with IPAC.

Managers or designate(s) have the discretion to allow or decline personal pet visitation in accordance with the parameters outlined in this policy.


Managers or designate(s) must advise those clients and their families/significant others who wish to have a personal pet visit of the conditions and restrictions as described in this policy. For personal pet visitation, the owner/handler must complete the *Central Health Pet Information Profile & Indemnity Form [Appendix A]* prior to personal pet visitation.

The pet owner/handler must be made aware of their responsibilities as a pet handler and provided with a copy of *Pet Visitation – Information for Pet Handlers [Appendix B]*.

### **Therapy Dog Visitation**

Therapy dogs are permitted to enter Central Health sites and facilities where the dog is part of an established community partner program such as St. John Ambulance Therapy

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Dog Program. Employee/ affiliated individual pets may visit clients in Central Health sites/ facilities providing they are certified by St. John Ambulance Dog Therapy Program. Therapy dogs must meet the St. John Ambulance criteria inclusive of up-to-date veterinarian examination(s) and mandatory vaccinations; a calm demeanor and gentle disposition; and pose no threat, inconvenience or risk to clients, family members or employees/affiliated individuals.

All volunteer St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog or St. John Ambulance certified dog visits must be coordinated through Central Health Volunteer Services or Recreation Therapy, in consultation with Infection, Prevention and Control and the care team.


## PROCEDURE

### FOR ALL ANIMAL VISITATION

**The Nursing/ Facility Manager or designate is responsible to:**

1. Take requests from clients and families.
2. Explain to families if their request has been denied and the reason for the decision.
3. Arrange visits if approved and only schedule one visit at a time.
4. Consult with care team and IPAC (where possible) to ensure client is a candidate for pet visit.
5. Inform the handler of this policy and provide copy of *Appendix B: Pet Visitation – Information for Pet Handlers*.
6. Ensure the handler has completed *Appendix A: Central Health Pet Information Profile & Indemnity Form* and place on client's file.
7. Obtain verbal permission from all clients present for the pet visitation and document in nursing notes.
8. Ensure that employees with allergies or are uncomfortable with animal visits are accommodated.
9. If Therapy Dog visit, post *Appendix C: Therapy Dog Visit in Session* sign outside location where visit is occurring.
10. Ensure the animal does not have contact with invasive devices, open wounds, or intravenous lines.
11. Ensure clients and employees who come in contact with the animal practice proper hand hygiene in accordance with the [2-20 Hand Hygiene Policy](#).
12. Notify Security (or designate) of the approval for the visit and provide details of date and time for the visit, where applicable.

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13. Escort handler to the unit for the scheduled visit and return.
14. Place a sheet or blanket over the client's bed before the visit begins and place in the laundry following the visit.
15. Complete a Clinical Safety Reporting System (CSRS) report in the event of an animal scratch, bite, or injury to a client.
16. Complete a Provincial Incident Employee Reporting System (PIERS) report in the event of an animal scratch, bite, or injury to an employee/affiliated individual.

**The Owner/Handler is responsible to:**

1. Complete Appendix A: *Central Health Pet Information Profile & Indemnity Form*.
2. Review Appendix B: *Pet Visitation – Information for Pet Handlers*.
3. St. John Ambulance handlers must wear their St. John Ambulance uniform for identification purposes.
4. Call the unit, site, or facility on the day of the scheduled visit and speak with a member of the client's health care team to determine if a visit is still appropriate and confirm a time.
5. Ensure the animal is clean, well groomed (including trimmed nails and recently bathed) and combed prior to the visit to decrease shedding of fur and dander; and free of fleas, ticks, worms, and other disease.
6. Accompany the animal at all times and report to security or reception upon entering the facility.
7. Keep the animal on a leash, or in a kennel or covered carrier for transport into the health care facility.
8. Report to the nursing station before proceeding to visit the client.
9. Meet the needs of the animal in terms of food, water and cleaning up after the animal.
10. Before entering an elevator with the animal, ask the other passengers for permission and not enter if other passengers refuse or appear to be apprehensive around the animal.
11. Self-screen for symptoms of communicable illness (i.e. fever, chills, sneezing, cough, nausea, vomiting) and refrain from visiting when ill.
12. Practice proper hand hygiene in accordance with the [2-20 Hand Hygiene Policy](#).
13. Notify employee if a client is scratched or bitten and immediately remove the animal following such an incident.

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## FOR THERAPY DOG VISITATION

### Volunteer Services or Therapeutic Recreation Staff are responsible to:

1. Ensure the dog handler is a St. John Ambulance volunteer and has met Central Health Volunteer Services' criteria inclusive of: an application, two references (St. John Ambulance reference forms are accepted if they are up to date and know the volunteer in a professional capacity), an up to date code of conduct within six months, and a Central Health pre-health assessment.
2. Ensure St. John Ambulance handlers attend a Central Health Volunteer Services' orientation prior to commencing visitations, review the Central Health [Confidentiality Policy](#), sign the [Oath/Affirmation of Confidentiality](#) and complete the Personal Health Information Act (PHIA) module suitable for volunteers (Indirect Contact with Personal Health Information).

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## RELATED RESOURCES


**Appendix A: Central Health Pet Information Profile & Indemnity Form**

**Appendix B: Pet Visitation – Information for Pet Handlers**

**Appendix C: Therapy Dog Visit in Session**

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**Appendix A: Central Health Pet Information Profile & Indemnity Form**

**Section A (Owner/handler of the pet to complete)**

Name of the client: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit/Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of owner/handler: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner/handler phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Pet Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age and Species: \_\_\_\_\_

I have been provided with a copy of policy ADM-0004 Pet Visitation Policy and the Handler Requirements for Personal Pet Visitation handout. I agree to follow the conditions in it. I confirm that the animal is up to date on all vaccinations (including rabies, parvovirus, adenovirus, and distemper).

I also agree to compensate Central Health for all liability, actions, claims, damages, and costs whatsoever that Central Health incurs from bringing the animal that is the subject of this form into the facility.

**Section B (Unit/Facility Manager to complete)**

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Yes                      | No                       | 1. The animal appears to be healthy and clean.    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. The animal appears to be well-trained.         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. The animal is in control of the owner/handler. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. The animal has current vaccinations.           |

Pet visitation approved:                      Yes                       No

Visit Location: \_\_\_\_\_


**Specific stipulations (if any):**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_


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## Appendix B: Pet Visitation – Information for Pet Handlers

<b>Pet Visitation</b>
<p><b>Requirements for Pet Handlers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The animal is to be clean, healthy, and well groomed (including trimmed nails, recently bathed and combed).</li> <li>• All vaccinations (including rabies, parvovirus, adenovirus, and distemper) are up to date.</li> <li>• Within the past 7 days, the animal has not had any episodes of: vomiting and diarrhea, urinary or fecal incontinence, episodes of sneezing or coughing (of unknown or suspected infectious origin), treatment with antimicrobials or with any immunosuppressive doses of medications, open wounds, ear infections, skin infections, orthopedic or other conditions that could result in pain or distress to the animal, seizures, or signs of heat stress.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Visitation Guidelines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least one adult known as the Handler will be responsible for the animal's safety and behavior during visits.</li> <li>• The Handler must supervise the animal at all times. Note: The client cannot be the one responsible for the animal's supervision.</li> <li>• The Handler is responsible for disposal of any waste while walking the animal and clean up any messes.</li> <li>• Animals will not be fed during the visit.</li> <li>• If it is determined that the animal's behavior is disruptive, the visitation will be terminated immediately.</li> <li>• Hand hygiene will be performed by the client and visitors before and after each animal contact.</li> </ul>
<p><b>On the day of the visit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call the unit, site, or facility on the day of the scheduled visit and speak with a member of the client's health care team to determine if a visit is still appropriate and confirm a time.</li> <li>• Allow the pet to urinate and defecate prior to entering the building.</li> <li>• Keep the animal on a leash, in a kennel or covered carrier for transport into the health care facility.</li> <li>• The pet will be transported directly to and from the nearest entrance to the unit being visited and only visit with the client approved for the visitation.</li> <li>• A sheet or blanket should be placed over the client's bed. It may be laundered as per normal processes.</li> <li>• Follow the direction of unit Team Members regarding the length of the visit (should be limited to one hour) and leave if requested.</li> </ul>

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**Appendix C: Therapy Dog Visit in Session**

St. John Ambulance  
Therapy Dog visit today

When:

Where:



Clients, family and visitors  
are invited to please join us!

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