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## **Service Animals/Pets Policy**

### **PURPOSE OF POLICY**

To assure that patients and/or visitors with disabilities, who are accompanied by service animals, are provided access to South Shore Orthopedics, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 272: Section 98A).

### **POLICY SUMMARY**

South Shore Orthopedics will accommodate service animals, but not pets, as specified in this policy.

### **DEFINITIONS**

**SERVICE ANIMAL:** A "service animal" is not a pet. The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a "service animal" as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. If an animal meets this definition, the animal is considered a service animal under the ADA, regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government.

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that individuals with disabilities cannot perform for themselves. "Seeing eye" dogs are one type of service animal, used by some individuals who are blind.

Other examples include animals who are trained to:

- Alert persons with hearing impairments to sounds.
- Pulling wheelchairs or carrying and picking up things for persons with mobility impairments.
- Assisting persons with mobility impairments and balance.

Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars and harnesses. Some, but not all, are licensed or certified and have identification papers.

**PETS:** Pets are defined as animals owned by patients, primarily for companionship. Pets have been shown to offer therapeutic benefits to individuals with certain health conditions (e.g., high blood pressure, stress, depression).

### **POLICY INFORMATION**

#### **Service animals**

- Patients and visitors with disabilities, who are accompanied by service animals, are entitled to any and all accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges and services offered by South Shore Orthopedics.

- If you are not certain whether an animal is a service animal, you may ask the person who has the animal if it is a service animal required because of a disability. You may not insist on proof of state certification before permitting the service animal to accompany the person with a disability. You also may not ask the individual the nature of his/her disability, nor may you ask for proof of that disability.
- Visitors with service animals may not be segregated from other visitors, exclusively because of the presence of the service animal. Staff or other visitors who express concern about the service animal (e.g., anxiety, allergies, etc.) should be notified of the animal's purpose and given an opportunity to relocate elsewhere, if they remain concerned.
- A service animal may be excluded from the Clinic when the animal's behavior is disruptive (e.g., excessive barking) or poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. Assumptions may not be made relative to how a particular animal is likely to behave based on past experience with other animals. Each situation must be considered individually. In such circumstances, the Practice Manager or designee should be promptly notified. A Practice Manager or designee may contact the Security and Public Safety officer from South Shore Hospital who will evaluate the appropriate action to take, which may include: (1) asking the individual to control the animal's behavior, (2) asking the individual to relocate to another area, where the service animal's behavior can be controlled, and/or (3) asking the individual to remove the service animal from the premises.
- Service animals may be excluded from certain sterile areas, after a determination is made by appropriate medical personnel that the presence of a service animal would pose a significant health risk.
- The care and supervision of service animals is solely the responsibility of their owners. South Shore Orthopedics is not required to provide care, food and/or a special location for service animals.

References: Americans with Disabilities Act, Code of Federal Regulations, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Massachusetts General Laws, Code of Massachusetts Regulations

## **PETS**

- South Shore Orthopedics recognizes the potential problems associated with pet visitation, including pet hygiene issues, behavior issues, and fears/allergies of other patients, visitors and staff. As a result, South Shore Orthopedics does not allow pets to accompany patients in the clinic. We ask that you please make accommodations to have a family member/friend (with familiarity in handling the pet) bring the pet to a designated area outside the building where the visit will take place. Pets will not be allowed in any patient care area.
- Visitors may not bring pets into the clinic, nor may they leave them unattended on the hospital property. Anyone who spots an unattended pet on hospital property should promptly notify the Security and Public Safety Department.

Effective Date:01/12/2017