

Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Procedure

Service Animal

Revision: X

Date: 1/7/2016

DEFINITIONS:

Direct Threat	A significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be mitigated or eliminated by modifying policies, practices, or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services. A direct threat shall be based on an individualized assessment.
Handler	A person with a disability who uses a service animal for the person's benefit.
Individualized Assessment	An assessment, based on reasonable judgment that relies on current medical knowledge or on the best available objective evidence, to ascertain: the nature, duration and severity of the risk; the probability that the potential injury will actually occur; and whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices or procedures will mitigate the risk.
Person with a Disability	An individual with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, including, but not limited to, walking, talking, seeing, breathing or hearing.
Service Animal	<p>A dog that is individually trained to perform tasks or activities for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including but not limited to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guiding individuals with vision impairments;• Alerting individuals with hearing impairments to sounds;• Assisting individuals with mobility impairments with balance. <p>A dog that meets this definition shall be considered a service animal regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a government agency or other certifying authority. A service animal is not a comfort animal or pet.</p>

RESPONSIBILITY

A. Service Animal Handler

1. Controls the animal and provides the animal with food, water and other necessary care, or makes such arrangement through family members, friends or an accompanying person, none of whom are staff.
2. Cleans up promptly after the service animal or has a family member, friend or

accompanying person do so.

3. If the service animal becomes out of control and the handler has not brought the animal under control within a reasonable amount of time, the handler must immediately remove the animal from VPCH or have family members, friends or accompanying persons do so.

B. Healthcare Provider/Staff: If a staff member is not certain that an animal is a service animal:

- The staff member may ask the service animal handler if the animal is used because of a disability
- The staff member may ask what specific task the animal has been trained to perform
- The staff member may not ask for a demonstration of the animal's task.

C. If the animal is not a service animal, it will not be permitted in VPCH.

PROCEDURE

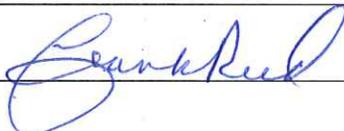
A. A service animal shall be permitted in any area of VPCH that is unrestricted to patients or visitors, provided that the service animal does not pose a direct threat and that the presence of the service animal would not require a fundamental alteration in VPCH's policies, procedures or practices. Any decision to exclude a service animal from a particular area of VPCH shall be made by the Medical Director or designee, or the Chief Executive Officer or designee after an individualized assessment.

1. Patients:

- a. Restricted Areas: Service animals are not permitted in areas where patients are also not permitted.
- b. Inpatient Areas: Service animals accompanying a visitor shall generally be permitted in inpatient areas provided that the service animal does not pose a direct threat and that the presence of the service animal does not require a fundamental alteration in VPCH policies, procedures or practices. As patient visitors are not permitted in an inpatient room, visitor service animals would not be permitted to enter a patient room except as under c. below. The only time that a visitor's service animal can be excluded from an inpatient area is following an individualized assessment by the Medical Director or designee, or the Chief Executive Officer or designee. If an individualized assessment leads to a determination that the service animal cannot remain in the room assigned to the handler, the handler shall be offered the option of being placed in another comparable room.
- c. Patient legal counsel, including Vermont Legal Aid, DRVT staff, and the Patient Representative are permitted to move freely within the inpatient area, including patient rooms. If individual in any of these categories is accompanied by a service animal, the service animal shall be permitted to accompany the individual within the

inpatient area, including the patient's room. A service animal accompanying a member of these categories may only be excluded from an area of the inpatient area based on an individualized assessment by the Medical Director or designee, or the Chief Executive Officer or designee

2. Allergies/Phobias: In the event a patient or staff member is allergic to or has a phobia about animals, VPCH shall modify its policies, practices and procedures to permit a service animal to remain with a handler in an inpatient area by, for example, moving the handler to another comparable room, changing staff schedules, or using other nondiscriminatory methods so that the presence of the service animal would not pose a direct threat and would not require a fundamental alteration in VPCH's policies, procedures or practices. Any patient or staff member with an allergy to animals shall provide verification within a reasonable time frame of request.

Approved by	Signature	Date
Frank Reed, Commissioner of DMH		11/29/16