



Animals in the Health Care Setting Policy

1. Purpose

The Animals in the Health Care Setting Policy outlines the key considerations for the provision of access by an animal to WA Country Health Service (WACHS) healthcare facilities.

This policy applies to all animals including Assistance Animals, Therapy Animals and Companion Animals in all WACHS settings including outpatient, emergency, inpatient, and residential care.

2. Policy

In accordance with legislation, owners of **Assistance Animals** have full public access rights, they can be accompanied by their Assistance Animal anywhere that members of the public are allowed to go, the exceptions to this are food preparation areas, sterile environments, and quarantine areas. Access to sterile areas may be approved in exceptional circumstances by the Health Service Manager in consultation with the Regional Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) noting that most sterile areas would not have full public access rights. Assistance animals are those which are appropriately trained, certified and for which the owner will hold an identification card.

Each request for the provision of access for **Therapy Animals** and **Companion Animals** by to a WACHS healthcare facility will be considered in line with the WACHS policy and current legislation and assessed individually with the consumers' needs at the forefront.

Requests for Therapy or Companion Animals to access to or reside in a WACHS healthcare facility must be approved by the Health Service Manager (HSM) or their delegate and approved in consultation with the Regional Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) In the residential aged care setting the facility Aged Care IPC lead must be notified on the decision to allow access for a therapy or companion animal. As with Assistance Animals, Therapy and Companion Animals are not permitted in food preparation areas, sterile environments, and quarantine areas. When assessing access for Therapy and Companion Animals consideration is to be given to:

- the health, safety, and comfort of other clients, patients and or residents including infection prevention and control.
- the ability to meet the behavioural, physiological and social needs of the particular animal by providing a clean, comfortable, sheltered and safe environment. An animal care plan must be developed for animals attending the health service for an extended period of time, staying overnight or residing at a facility.
- the benefit to the client(s), patient(s) or resident(s) of being able to access the therapy or companion animal
- the selection, screening and training of any volunteer involved in bringing animals into a WACHS site (refer to WACHS [Volunteer Policy](#)).

Refer to the WACHS [Animals in the Health Care Setting Guideline](#) for details.

Any incidents involving clients, patients, residents, visitors or staff are to be reported, investigated and monitored via the relevant incident reporting systems e.g. SIRS, CIMS Datix, OSH report. Additionally, the mandatory reporting of zoonosis related injuries or disease is stipulated within the Work Health and Safety Act 2020 Regional Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) departments, and the Regional Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) are to be informed immediately of zoonosis related injuries or diseases.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The **Regional Executive Director** is responsible for:

- ensuring procedures are in place to support animal visits and pets in health services
- management of associated risks
- adhering to Australian Government and Federal legislation requirements.

Infection Prevention and Control Coordinator/Lead is responsible for:

- reporting identified cases of infections including outbreaks of Salmonella, Campylobacter, Toxocariasis, Toxoplasmosis, Yersinia, Chlamydia Psittaci and adhering to legislation, national policies and guidelines
- assisting in review of approval for the provision of access of animals

Directors of Nursing Health Service Managers are responsible for:

- ensuring staff are aware of the policy
- implementation of the policy
- monitoring compliance with this policy.

All staff are required to comply with the directions in WACHS policies and procedures as per their roles and responsibilities. Guidelines are the recommended course of action for WACHS and staff are expected to use this information to guide practice. If staff are unsure which policies procedures and guidelines apply to their role or scope of practice, and/or are unsure of the application of directions they should consult their manager in the first instance.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of compliance with this document is to be carried out by individual sites using the following means or tools:

- records of consumer feedback/complaints.
- data obtained from SIRS, CIMS Datix, SRR or WHS data.

Evaluation of this policy is to be carried out by the Aged Care Directorate every three (3) years, or as required.

5. References

[Animal Contact Guidelines Reducing the Risk of Illness Associated with Animal Contact.](#) Government of South Australia.

[Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infections in Healthcare](#) (Cth). Accessed 18 November 2024.

[Animal-Visits-in-Healthcare.pdf \(acipc.org.au\)](https://www.acipc.org.au/Animal-Visits-in-Healthcare.pdf)

Accessed March 2024

Animals in Health Care Facilities: Recommendations to Minimise Potential Risks. [Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology](#), vol 36, Issue 05, May 2015 pp495-516.

6. Definitions

Term	Definition
Assistance Animal	An assistance animal is legally defined under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 as “a dog or other animal that is: (a) is accredited under a State or Territory law to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effects of disability; or (b) is accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed in the regulations; or (c) is trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability and meets standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.”
Therapy Animal	A therapy animal is an animal registered in a recognised therapy program that usually belong to the therapist or therapy organisation. Therapy animals generally only have contact with the client during the therapy session and don't stay with the client after the session is finished.
Companion Animal	A companion animal or pet are all other animals that are not accredited assistance animals or therapy animals registered as part of a recognised therapy program.
Resident	A resident is a person who has been admitted to a bed within a WA Country Health Service facility as a permanent or respite care resident.
Residential care	Part 3.1 Division 41-3 Meaning of residential care (b) Residential care is personal care or nursing care, or both personal care and nursing care, that: (b) is provided to a person in a residential facility in which the person is also provided with accommodation that includes: (b) appropriate staffing to meet the nursing and personal care needs of the person; and (ii) meals and cleaning services; and (iii) furnishings, furniture and equipment for the provision of that care and accommodation; and

	(b) meets any other requirements specified in the Subsidy Principles.
Staff	Staff member, of a health service provider, means: (a) an employee in the health service provider (b) a person engaged under a contract for services by the health service provider;(section 6, <i>Health Services Act 2016</i>)
Zoonotic disease / Zoonosis	Zoonotic diseases are infections that are passed from animals to humans.

7. Document Summary

Coverage	WACHS
Audience	Regional Executive Directors MPS Operations Managers Director of Nursing / Health Service Managers All staff working in WACHS Karlarra House and Multi-Purpose Service sites
Records Management	Non Clinical: Corporate Recordkeeping Compliance Policy
Related Legislation	Aged Care Act 1997 (Cth) Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Act 2018 (Cth) Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Rules 2018 Animal Welfare Act 2002 (WA) Carers Recognition Act 2004 (WA) Charter of Aged Care Rights 2019 (WA) Dog Act 1976 (WA) Dog Amendment Act 2013 (WA) Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) Disability Services Act 1986 (Cth) Health Services Act 2016 (WA) National Insurance Disability Scheme Act 2013 (Cth) Work Health and Safety Act 2020 (WA)
Related Mandatory Policies / Frameworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical Governance Safety and Quality
Related WACHS Policy Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animals in the Health Care Setting Guideline • Environmental Cleaning Policy • Hazard and Incident Management Procedure • Infection Prevention and Control Policy • Work Health and Safety Policy • Waste Management Policy • Volunteer Policy
Other Related Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nil
Related Forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety Risk Report Form
Related Training Packages	Nil
Aboriginal Health Impact Statement Declaration (ISD)	ISD Record ID: 3831
National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards	1.7, 1.10, 1.11, 1.13, 1.14, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.11, 3.12, 3.13
Chief Psychiatrist's Standards for Clinical Care	Nil
Aged Care Quality Standards	1 (3)(a); 1(3)(b); 6 (3)(a); 6 (3)(d)
Other Standards	National Disability Insurance Scheme Practice Standards : 1.3; 1.4; 2.1; 2.3; 3.2; 4.1

9. Document Control

Version	Published date	Current from	Summary of changes
6.00	13 January 2025	13 January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedural Information, Hand Hygiene and Infection Prevention and Control sections removed (now included in accompanying Guideline) Definitions updated Inclusion of NSQHS, MPS Aged Care Module Actions and NDIS Practice Standards

10. Approval

Policy Owner	Chief Operations Officer
Co-approver	Nil
Contact	Safety and Quality Coordinator
Business Unit	Aged Care Directorate
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