



ACIPC Recommends

- All healthcare facilities (HCF) should develop a policy for *assistance animals* that complies with Commonwealth, State and local council legislation.
- The facility infection control professional is notified when a patient is admitted with an accredited assistance animal to establish any specific requirements.
- All HCF with *animal assisted therapy programs* and *animal assisted activities* should develop a policy which, in addition to compliance with State and local council legislation, should include types of animals allowed for these activities, certification of animals and their trainers/handlers, education of HCF staff, and education of animal trainers/handlers regarding organisational policies and procedures, animal hygiene, patient hygiene, and animal access.
- All HCF that have *facility pet/s* should develop a policy that complies with Commonwealth, State and local council legislation.
- All HCF facilities should develop a policy on *personal pet visitations*.
- The facility infection control professional is notified of all proposed animal visitations, assisted animal interventions or introduction of a facility pet to establish any specific requirements.
- All animals visiting or permanently residing in HCF are screened for parasites, and skin problems and are fully vaccinated (a veterinary immunisation certificate should be provided).
- All animals are restricted from entering operating theatres, sterilising departments, intensive care areas and food preparation areas.
- Animal access for isolated patients and immuno-suppressed patients is negotiated based on individual patient/client requirements.
- All patients, healthcare workers, volunteers and visitors who have contact with an animal must perform hand hygiene either with soap and water or, an alcohol-based handrub.

PS ID	Category	Responsible Body	Review Due	Effective Date
P1	Policy	Policy Committee	Feb 2016	May 2016

1. Introduction

Healthcare facilities (HCF) may be visited by assistance, therapeutic and companion animals and these animals may pose a risk of pathogen transmission via direct and indirect contact with patients and staff.² However, there is limited evidence to quantify the risk that animals in HCF pose to patients and staff.² Due to the uncertainties around the health risks of animal visitations to HCF, ACIPC recommends that all HCF and organisations develop policies and procedures that address risks among their own specific facility's patient populations.

2. Definitions

Assistance animal – is defined as follows under the ‘Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992¹ – Part 1 Subsection 9 (2).’

‘For the purposes of this Act, an assistance animal is a dog or other animal:

- (a) accredited under a law of a State or Territory that provides for the accreditation of animals trained to assist persons with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; or
- (b) accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph; or
- (c) trained:
 - (i) to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; and
 - (ii) to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.’

Animal assisted therapy – tailored individual therapy under professional supervision with an animal trained for the role.

Animal assisted activity – animals and specially trained volunteer or professional handlers visit patients and their families at the bedside or in common areas.

Personal pet visitation – the patient's own pet visits them whilst in a healthcare or long term care facility.

Facility pets – animals in permanent residence within a healthcare or long term care facility.

3. Legislative Position

Discrimination against a person with a disability who has an accredited assistance animal is not permitted under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* but the following exemptions as outlined may apply in the circumstances outlined in the ‘Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* – Part 2, Division 5, 54A’’

‘54A Assistance animals:

- (1) This section applies in relation to a person with a disability who has an assistance animal.
- (2) This Part does not render it unlawful for a person to request or to require that the assistance animal remain under the control of:

- (a) the person with the disability; or
 - (b) another person on behalf of the person with the disability.
- (3) For the purposes of subsection (2), an assistance animal may be under the control of a person even if it is not under the person's direct physical control.
- (4) This Part does not render it unlawful for a person (the *discriminator*) to discriminate against the person with the disability on the ground of the disability, if:
 - (a) the discriminator reasonably suspects that the assistance animal has an infectious disease; and
 - (b) the discrimination is reasonably necessary to protect public health or the health of other animals.
- (5) This Part does not render it unlawful for a person to request the person with the disability to produce evidence that:
 - (a) the animal is an assistance animal; or
 - (b) the animal is trained to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.
- (6) This Part does not render it unlawful for a person (the *discriminator*) to discriminate against the person with the disability on the ground that the person with the disability has the assistance animal, if:
 - (a) the discriminator requests or requires the person with the disability to produce evidence referred to in subsection (5); and
 - (b) the person with the disability neither:
 - (i) produces evidence that the animal is an assistance animal; nor
 - (ii) produces evidence that the animal is trained to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.'

ACIPC believes that:

- Accredited assistance animals cannot be prohibited from entering a HCF but may be restricted from access to certain areas as outlined in the exemptions in the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992.
- The risk of zoonotic infections can be minimised with the implementation of policies and guidelines regarding animal health and hygiene, patient health and hygiene, and restricted areas within the HCF.

ACIPC resolves to:

- Support animal-assisted interventions, facility pets and personal pet visitations in healthcare facilities where this is evidence-based and

appropriate.

- Maintain up-to-date knowledge regarding infection prevention and control issues relating to pet therapy and pet visitors to healthcare facilities.

4. References

1. Commonwealth of Australia. *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. View at: <https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2015C00252>.
2. Murthy R, Bearman G, Brown S, Bryant K, Chinn R, Hewlett A, George, BG, Goldstein E, Holzmann-Oazgal G, Rupp M, Wiemken T, Weese J, Weber D. Animals in healthcare facilities: Recommendations to minimize potential risks. *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology*. 2015; 36(5): 495-516.

5. Other Related Documents

1. Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* – Part 1 Subsection 9 (2) and Subsection 9 (4); Part 2, Division 5 s 54A.
2. Australian Capital Territory *Domestic Animals Act 2000*
3. New South Wales *Companion Animals Act 1998*
4. Northern Territory *Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004*
5. Queensland *Guide Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009*
6. Queensland *Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008*
7. South Australia *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995*
8. Tasmania *Guide Dogs and Hearing Dogs Act 1967*
9. Victoria *Domestic (Feral and Nuisance) Animals Act 1994*
10. Western Australia *Dog Act 1976*

Version	Date	Role	Position	Signature
1.0	June 2012	Submitted By E Gillespie	Chair Policy Committee	NA
Authorized By: Executive Council			Meeting Date: June 2012	

Revision history

Version	Date	Additions/Amendments	Author	Review By
2.0	Jan 2016	Amended template, included updated legislation and literature evidence	F Wilson, ACIPC Policy Committee member	Policy Committee/ACIPC Executive Council
3.0	Oct 2016	Minor edits	T. van de Mortel, ACIPC Policy Chair	ACIPC Board of Directors