



<b>Purpose:</b>	To identify the conditions in which animals are permitted to visit Island Health facilities, while safeguarding staff, patients and residents from the risks of transmission of infections from animals to humans. While animals provide many benefits to staff, patients and residents, they are some associate risks that can be addressed through safe practices.
<b>Cultural Safety and Humility:</b>	<p>Island Health offers programs and services on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw Peoples.</p> <p>As a signatory to the 2015 Declaration of Commitment to Cultural Safety and Cultural Humility, Island Health is committed to addressing the ongoing impacts of colonialism and Indigenous-specific racism in order to provide a culturally safe, inclusive, healthy and respectful environment.</p> <p>The organization is committed to strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion to enable excellence in health and care for everyone, everywhere, every time. Through these commitments, Island Health strives to deliver the highest possible standard of care and to promote safe workplaces.</p>
<b>Scope:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Audience:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff, medical staff, and volunteers of Island Health and its subsidiaries;</li> <li>○ Physicians, dentists, mid-wives and other allied health professionals with an Island Health appointment and privileges or who contract with Island Health who provide care or services on behalf of Island Health;</li> <li>○ Medical residents; and</li> <li>○ Students, trainees, and educators.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Environment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Island Health-wide.</li> <li>○ All care settings across the continuum of care.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Exceptions:</b> None.</li> </ul>

## 1.0 Policy

- Staff members and physicians are not permitted to have personal pets accompany them into a health care facility at any time, even if the animal is registered as a therapy animal, unless a medical accommodation is required.
- Staff members who require a medical accommodation for a therapy animal in the workplace will require approval from Occupational Health and Safety and Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC).
- All staff animal therapy is to be coordinated by the Island Health Volunteer Resource and Engagement program in conjunction with the Infection Prevention and Control Program and the site leadership.
- Staff/patients/residents who require a service animal to be with them for prolonged periods in the healthcare facility will require a plan.
- Animal handlers/pet owners must be in control of the animal at all times.
- Animals that become ill during a visit are to be immediately removed from the facility.
- Staff must be familiar and comply with the Island Health [Hand Hygiene Policy](#).
  - Hand hygiene is one of the most important actions when engaging in animal visitation.
  - All persons having contact with the animal must perform hand hygiene before and after interaction with the animal.

Maintained by:	Infection Prevention and Control				
Issuing Authority:	IPAC-OHS CCC				
Last Revised:	2025-JULY-4	Last Reviewed:	2023-AUG-18	First Issued:	2023-AUG-18



# Animal Visitation Policy

## 9.1.47P

Policies direct required organizational practice/behaviour



- Staff must be familiar with and follow the [Animal Visitation Guideline](#).

### 1.1 Exclusions and Limitations

- The following animals are **excluded** from visiting patients/clients inside any facility:
  - Female dogs in season.
  - Animals that have not been litter trained.
  - Animals that have not been house trained.
  - Animals that have been ill in the previous 7-days with vomiting, diarrhea, sneezing, coughing, or discharge from the nose or eyes.
  - Non-human primates, reptiles, amphibians, rodents, farm animals, zoo animals, or birds.
  - Farm animals:
    - Farm animals can be kept in an enclosure outside and not enter a facility.
    - Farm animals must not be touched by staff/patients/residents.
- With the exception of certified guide or service animals (see [definition below](#)), all other animals, including therapy animals, are **prohibited** to visit:
  - Surgical Units;
  - Critical Care Units (ICU, CCU, PICU, NICU);
  - Dialysis Units;
  - Burn Units;
  - Labor and Delivery and Mother/Babe Units;
  - Laboratories;
  - Rooms on additional precautions (including multibed rooms where one patient is on additional precautions); and
  - Cafeterias or dining rooms.
- No animals, including certified guide or service animals, are permitted in the following areas:
  - Operating Rooms and Recovery Rooms;
  - Clean storage;
  - Medication preparation; and
  - Public food preparation areas.
- No animal is permitted to live in an Island Health facility without an IPAC approved plan.

### 2.0 Monitoring and Evaluation

- Manager or delegate must approve all personal pet visits, before the animal is allowed on the unit, according to the [Animal Visitation Guideline](#).
- The Manager/Clinical Nurse Leader or IPAC may request the removal of any visiting animals that have not been approved, and do not comply with the [Animal Visitation Guideline](#).
- A record of animal visits must be maintained by the unit or program **organizing** the visit, as a method to facilitate contact tracing. This requirement excludes visits arranged through Volunteer Resources and Engagement.

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- Only dogs approved by community partner agencies who screen and recommend therapy animals, and with whom Volunteer Resources & Engagement have an MOU may participate in Island Health's Therapy Animal Volunteer Programs.
- Guide and Service animals are permitted in Island Health facilities in compliance with the [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#).
  - If a Certified Guide or Service Dog is required to be with a patient/client/staff at all times, additional planning is required.
- Site directors, managers, and Volunteer Resources and Engagement staff (where applicable), are responsible for the application of the policy as outlined in this document.
- Infection Prevention and Control is responsible for reviewing and updating this policy.

### 3.0 Definitions

- **Additional precautions:** Interventions implemented for certain pathogens or clinical presentations in addition to routine infection control practices, to reduce the risk of transmission of microorganisms from patient to patient, patient to health care provider (HCP), and HCP to patient.
- **Certified Guide and Service Animals:** an animal that has received appropriate training and has been certified under the [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#) of British Columbia.
- **Clinical Nurse Leader:** direct care unit leader.
- **Guide and Service Animals:** Animals that are certified and regulated under the [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#) of British Columbia. They help people who require assistance to avoid hazards or to perform tasks. The animal must have a certificate from an accredited Assistance Dogs International (ADI), the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), or by schools previously approved by the Ministry of Justice of British Columbia.
- **Island Health Volunteer Resource and Engagement Department:** Department within Island Health that coordinates volunteer support in care areas.
- **Manager:** non contract leader of a care area
- **Pet:** An animal kept for pleasure or companionship.
- **Therapy Animals:** Also referred to as Animal Therapy Teams. These are organized volunteer programs using screened and trained animals (dogs) and handlers who facilitate interactions between patients and animals to achieve specific physical, social, cognitive and emotional goals.

### 4.0 Related Island Health Policy Documents

- [Animal Visitation Guideline](#)
- [Hand Hygiene Policy](#)
- [Hand Hygiene Procedure](#)

### 5.0 References

- Accreditation Canada. A comprehensive hand-hygiene strategy is in place. *Infection prevention and control standards*. [Internet]. Ottawa (ON): Accreditation Canada; [cited 2024 Dec 21]
- Boyle SF, Corrigan VK, Buechner-Maxwell V, Pierce BJ. Evaluation of Risk of Zoonotic Pathogen Transmission in a University-Based Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI) Program. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* [Internet]. 2019 Jun 4;6. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2019.00167>

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- Hamer SA, Ghai RR, Zecca IB, Auckland LD, Roundy CM, Davila E, et al. SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7 variant of concern detected in a pet dog and cat after exposure to a person with COVID-19, USA. *Transboundary and Emerging Diseases* [Internet]. 2021 May 12;69(3):1656–8. Available from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/tbed.14122>
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## 6.0 Resources

- [Guide Dog and Service Dog Act](#) (British Columbia, Canada. 2015).
- [Guide and Service Dog Certification](#) (British Columbia, Canada. 2024).
- Island Health [Clostridioides \(Clostridium\) difficile Infection Guideline](#)
- Island Health [Carbapenemase Producing Organisms \(CPO\)](#)

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