

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE SESLHD BUSINESS RULE SESLHDBR/089

Name	Companion Animals in South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) Mental Health Facilities		
What it is	This business rule outlines the responsibilities on how to manage companion animals prior to an inpatient admission and avoid unregistered animals and companion animals from entering an inpatient facility.		
Risk Rating	Low	Review Date	November 2027
What it is not	This business rule IS NOT a detailed description on how to manage assistance animals, hearing assistance animals, animal assisted therapy (or Pet Therapy) and other registered, accredited or service animals, as per: NSW Ministry of Health Guideline - GL2012_007 Animal Visits and Interventions in Public and Private Health Services in NSW , Companion Animals Regulation 2018 , and Companion Animals Act 1998 .		
Who it applies to	Applicable to all SESLHD inpatient mental health facilities, consumers or carers, and animal handlers.		
Definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A companion animal refers to a dog, cat or any animal prescribed by the NSW Companion Animals Regulation 2018. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The animal is identified on a basis by the implantation of a microchip. ○ The animal should have a certificate of registration and a collar with name, address and telephone number of owner. ○ Companion animals are domestic animals who have some training and safe animal behaviour for human-animal interaction (HAI). The HAI is the relationship between humans and animals and brings about a significant and positive influence on the social, emotional and physical well-being of people. • An animal handler refers to the person who is in charge of the animal at the time (e.g. consumer, carer, friends, assigned person) 		
How to use it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consumer, carer and family must be informed that companion animals are not permitted to stay with a client during an inpatient admission. <p>Consumers Currently Managed by the Adult Community Mental Health Service Teams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a consumer has an identified companion animal, the consumer should have a documented Animal Welfare Care Plan in place identifying arrangements for animal care in the 		

case of admission to the mental health service (e.g. care coordinator, welfare worker or appropriate person of the service to documented plan in eMR Care Plan or Management Plan where possible).

- Evidence of microchipping and registration is required for a Companion Animal to enter NSW Health Facilities. Care Coordinators should encourage consumers to obtain the correct documentation to ensure the animal can visit following an admission. Once correct documentation has been obtained, the clinician should enter an “Animal Welfare Care Plan” into eMR.

Admission without an existing Animal Welfare Care Plan

- If the person is being admitted following an Emergency Department presentation, contact should be made with either the family, carer or friend to accept care of the animal during the admission. If no one is able to take immediate care of the animal the RSPCA should be contacted on 02 9770 7555 for interim care arrangements.
- Where there are concerns relating to the welfare of the companion animal, the Mental Health Service (MHS) will inform the primary carer or family in the first instance, to manage the concerns. If the concerns remain, the MHS (eg social worker, welfare worker or appropriate person of the service) will contact the appropriate agency, such as the local animal welfare service, for interim care.
- Where a companion animal has been brought to the facility, unplanned, the service must arrange for the animal to be cared for by the animal handler (this will be the person who has brought the animal to the facility) at the time. If the consumer is also the animal handler and is unable to identify someone to take immediate care of the animal, please contact the RSPCA as outlined above.
 - NB The animal handler should be above the age of 16 years. The animal handler will be responsible for control of the animal (i.e. dog) including the animal’s excrement in public areas.
- At no point should a companion animal be retained at the mental health facility.

NB: An inspectorate team from animal welfare (e.g. RSPCA, Animal Welfare League) has capability to collect the animal without the consumer’s consent, if the consumer is not in a position to give consent. However, it is advised to resolve the matter with care in collaboration with the consumer, where possible.

Unit Conditions / Facilities to Accommodate Companion Animal Visitation

- Visiting times and conditions with a companion animal are to be discussed with NUM/Nurse in Charge prior to visit, and risk assessed dependent on the consumers clinical presentation, staffing on that day, disruption to treatment plan and distress to the consumer.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff may postpone any visit in the best interests of the consumer; however specific risk factors must be identified and clearly documented in the file. • In addition to the eMR Clinical Risk Assessment, additional risks should also be considered. These risks may include but not be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Environmental controls during and following animal visits ○ Location of visit ○ Distress of animal and/or consumer when separating them ○ Increase of patient’s distress when interacting with the animal ○ Unreasonable handling of the animal by the consumer • Arrangement for companion animal visitation need to be away from the clinical area of the mental health inpatient unit, where the following risks are not present: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Children’s play area ○ Food preparation or consumption area ○ Endangering the health of any person or animal <p>Persistent noise, e.g. barking that unreasonably interferes with the peace, comfort or convenience of any person in the premises.</p>
Additional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accredited and registered animals that enter the facility must comply with the required training under the appropriate Therapy Animal Organisation as per NSW Ministry of Health Guideline GL2012_007 - Animal Visits and Interventions in Public and Private Health Services in NSW. These types of animals must have oversight by the mental health service and be approved by the Service Director, Clinical Operational Manager or delegate. • Processes for the animal visitation program is reviewed annually (or earlier). An animal visitation record should be kept locally, see Appendix A for Sample Facility Record for Animal visitation. • Compliance to Ministry of Health Policy Directive - PD2017_013 Infection Prevention and Control Policy and Patient Safety: Hand Hygiene is required. • Assistance Animals must not be denied entry as per NSW Companion Animal Act 1998.
Why the rule is necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable consumer’s rights and responsibilities, respect of property, and support service integrity and quality. • Provide standardised safe workplace practice across services for consumers, visitors and staff members.
When to use it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A companion animal has been brought onto an inpatient facility unplanned. • Planned animal visits, where the facility has resources to accommodate Animal Visitation Program in a non-clinical area (e.g. designate animal friendly area) as per NSW Ministry of Health Guideline GL2012_007 - Animal Visits and Interventions in Public and Private Health Services in NSW • At the review of a care plan where animal welfare concerns have been identified.

References	<p>NSW Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GL2012_007 - Animal Visits and Interventions in Public and Private Health Services in NSW • PD2017_013 Infection Prevention and Control Policy <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Companion Animals Act 1998 • NSW Companion Animals Regulation 2018 • Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 • Hand Hygiene Australia
Who is responsible	All staff members of the Mental Health Service
Functional Group	Mental Health
Executive Sponsor	General Manager, Mental Health Service
Author	<p>Alison McInerney Policy & Document Development Officer, Mental Health Service</p> <p>Jarrad Hickmott Consumer Partnerships Coordinator, Mental Health Service</p>

Revision and Approval History

Date	Revision Number	Author and Approval
November 2018	0	Preliminary consultation: Leonie Dunn, Rehabilitation Coordinator, SESLHD MHS; Evelyn Chandler, Service Director, SGH/TSH MHS, Mike Gatsi, Service Director, ESMHS. Incorporated feedback from initial working group: Megan Edwards, Social Worker, SGH MHS; Julie Duncan, Inpatient Manager, TSH MH; Karen Foley, NUM, ESMHS.
December 2018	0	Draft version 2 revised by: Trinh Huynh, Policy and Document Development Officer, SESLHD MHS; Max Simensen, Consumer Partnerships Coordinator, SESLHD MHS. Consulted initial working group.
April 2019	0	Accepted changes from Evelyn Chandler, Service Director, STG/TSH MHS. Working party to detail visitation of Companion Animals formed: Julie Duncan, Inpatient Service Manager, Kim Reid, CNC3, Candice Fogarty, NUM2, Victor Syquia, Professional Head Social Work TSH MHS and Max Simensen, Consumer Partnerships Coordinator and Alison McInerney, A/Policy and Documents Officer SESLHD MHS
May 2019	0.1	Incorporates comments from the working party
May 2019	0.2	Incorporates feedback from A Karooz
May 2019	0.3	Circulated to COMs for feedback which has been incorporated into document
June 2019	0.4	Endorsed by the SESLHD MHS DDCC Endorsed by the SESLHD MHS Clinical Council
August 2019	0.4	Formatted by Executive Services prior to tabling at August 2019 Clinical and Quality Council Meeting for approval to publish
August 2019	1	Approved to publish at August 2019 Clinical and Quality Council meeting
September 2022	2	Routine Review commenced. Executive Sponsor and Author details updated. Links checked and updated. Risk rating revision.
October 2022	2.1	Circulated to DDCC for review and feedback. Minor changes identified.
November 2022	2.1	Endorsed DDCC. Endorsed by Executive Sponsor.

Sample Facility Record for Animal Visitation

ANIMALS AND OWNER/HANDLERS			
Date of Visit:		Animal Agency:	
Animal type		Animal's name:	
Owner/Handlers Name		Contact Details:	
Animal Health Certification		Yes	

VISITATION PROTOCOL			
Health Service staff responsible for an Animal Visitation are to assess the following to determine whether the Visitation is to proceed.	YES	NO	COMMENT
Have infection control and hand hygiene protocols been met			
Has the animal been washed in the last 24 hours prior to visit			
Has the animal/s health status been verified and approved for visits			
Is the animal supporting a patient during a clinical procedure			
Has the patient/s and clinician consented to the animal visit			
Are there any patients in isolation or who can't be seen?			
Have any patients been admitted due to an animal (e.g. dog) bite?			
Are any patients fearful of animals (e.g. dogs)?			
Are any patients allergic to animal fur or hair?			
Decision to postpone/cancel Visitation.			

Visiting volunteers for all animal visitations are to be reminded:

- Use of anti-bacterial hand rub and hand hygiene practices before and after animal visits
- If a procedure is taking place, or a doctor is with a patient please return later
- If the patient wishes to have the dog sit on the bed, please place a fresh towel on the bed
- Check with ward staff about where to obtain and dispose of towels used by animals
- Please be respectful of an individual's wishes where patients do not want a visit and where some cultures and religions believe dogs to be unclear or may find them offensive
- Volunteers and handlers are to stay with the visiting animal at all times
- Report any incidents (e.g. accidents, bites, scratches) immediately to health staff and register the incident on the Incident Information Management System (IIMS). The definition of a reportable incident is published in the NSW Health Policy Directive PD 2005_634, Reportable Incident according to Section 20L of the Health Administration Act

Officer Authorising Visitation

Name: Date:.....
 Position: