SUBJECT: SERVICE ANIMALS IN THE AMBULATORY SURGERY CENTER

Definition: The ADA defines a service animal as any domestic animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a physical, cognitive, or mental disability. Service animals DO NOT include wild animals or animals whose sole function is to provide emotional support, comfort, therapy, companionship, therapeutic benefits, or promote emotional well-being.

The ADA specifies that the care and behavior management of the service animal is the responsibility of the handler. “No Pet” policies may not be applied automatically to service animals. Persons accompanied by service animals may be informed of any areas that are off-limits to service animals. This may occur when the person enters the facility and should be done in a polite and respectful manner. Policies must be communicated to the person in a way that is accessible and understandable for that person.

POLICY:

Service animals will be allowed access to the facility in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 2006, unless the presence of the animal creates a direct threat to other persons or a fundamental alteration in the nature of services.

Due to the nature of health care services carried out in the ambulatory surgery center, the service animal may not be taken into the semi-restricted or restricted pre-operative, post-operative, procedure or operating rooms areas. A patient who requires a service animal may have his/her accompanying adult companion remain with the animal in the waiting room, building lobby or outside the building, whichever is desired by the companion. This should be discussed during the pre-admission phone call, if the possibility of a service animal is known at that time.

When a patient must be separated from his or her service animal while in the health-care facility:
   a. Ascertain from the person what arrangements have been made for supervision or care of the animal during this period of separation;
   b. Make appropriate arrangements to address the patient’s needs in the absence of the service animal.

Staff education shall be conducted regarding the service animal policy. Persons shall perform hand hygiene after direct contact with the service animal, contact of the animal with equipment or furnishings, or other items with which it has been in contact.

No special housekeeping methods are needed, provided there is no contamination with animal urine, feces, vomit, or blood. Normal cleaning of the lobby or waiting area should occur. If the animal contaminates the area, the cleanup procedures should be performed by using appropriate personal protective equipment. Gloves are the minimum protection that should be used. The spill should be removed with paper towels, which shall be placed in a plastic bag in the trash container. After removal of the organic debris, the area of the spill shall be cleaned with a facility-approved disinfectant, following label instructions for adequate contact time to ensure disinfection.