

Policy & Procedure Manual

PETS IN THE GROUP HOMES – R-VII-9

POLICY:

OPTIONS northwest believes that individuals who receive support have the right to own pets. Some may require the support of a service animal. It is the role of employees to counsel people on the responsibilities associated with pet ownership, including the care and cost involved. Other individuals residing in the home will have the opportunity to provide their input prior to a pet being brought into the group home.

OPTIONS northwest acknowledges that pets provide not only companionship but some health benefits as well since studies have shown that petting a cat or dog can lower heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure.

In the interest of recipients' and staff' safety and consideration of infection control, restrictions are necessary when pets are visiting or living at a group home. Approval must be obtained prior to allowing pets into the work place.

PURPOSE:

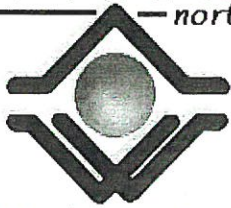
1. To outline conditions when pets may be brought into the home to visit and to interact with individuals.
2. To outline conditions for recipients to own a pet.
3. To ensure dogs that fall under the definition of pit bull, do not visit or live in group homes in order to comply with the Dog Owners Liability Act.

DEFINITIONS:

"Visiting Pets" will be defined as an animal accepted into the home for a limited visitation period, as approved in advance, by the supervisor.

"Recipient-Owned Pets" will be defined as an animal owned for companionship.

"Service Animals" will be defined as an animal that is being used because of a person's disability and this is either readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a medical practitioner.



Personal Support Services

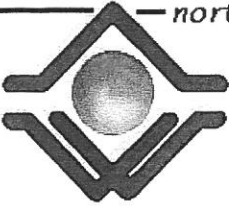
PROCEDURE:

A) VISITING PETS:

1. The request to bring a pet in to the home to visit a recipient of service will be made to the supervisor of the home in advance. The supervisor will determine appropriateness, time, place and length of the visit. The decision to allow pet visits will include consideration of allergies of individuals and support staff. Consideration will also be given to medical contraindications, suitability of the pet, risk of infection and fear of pets.
2. The visit, once approved by the Supervisor, will be documented including observation of the reaction of individuals and pets and can be discussed at the next team meeting to discuss the possibility of further visits.
3. Under **no** circumstance is a pet to be brought in to work for purposes of accompanying an employee during their shift. When the visit is for therapeutic purposes, and, once completed, transportation arrangements will be made to have the pet picked up.
4. No visiting pets will be transported in agency vehicles.

B) RECIPIENT-OWNED PETS:

1. When an individual who receives support wants to acquire a pet, every effort will be made to help them pursue that interest.
2. Staff should provide information to the person in a manner they can understand so they are fully aware of the responsibilities and costs associated with owning a pet. It is important that the individual is financially able to take care of a pet (veterinary costs, food, supplies, etc.) as these expenses will not be paid by OPTIONS northwest.
3. Staff are required to work with the individual to help them to consider the implications of pet ownership on others, particularly those who share their living space. This includes support staff. There are situations where an individual may not be able to have a pet due to their particular living arrangements. (For example, consideration for a roommate who is allergic to or has a fear of cats would prevent a person from acquiring a cat.)
4. A plan of care for the pet will be developed with the individual ensuring all the above issues are addressed. The plan will be submitted to the Director of Personal Support Services for approval.



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POLICY: R-VII-9

DEPARTMENT: Personal Support Services

CATEGORY: Environmental

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 2013

SUPERSEDES VERSION DATED: May 2008

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5. Once approval is obtained, the plan will be included as part of the pet owner's Individual Support Plan.
6. As required by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, records will be maintained of all veterinary visits including vaccination records. These records will be accessible and available during an MCSS compliance review.

C) SERVICE ANIMALS:

1. OPTIONS will accommodate any recipient of service who requires the support of a service animal.
2. It shall be primarily the responsibility of the recipient of service to care for a service animal (i.e. financially, physically) although support staff shall provide assistance as required.
3. A plan of care for the pet will be developed with the individual and will be included as part of the pet owner's Individual Support Plan.

RECOMMENDED BY: Director, Personal Support Services

APPENDICES: 0

OPERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Administration, Personal Support Services
Administration, Personal Support Services

ORIGINAL POLICY DATE: April 2006

AUTHORIZED BY: Executive Director

SIGNATURE:

