

<b>Resident Services – Pet Visitation Policy</b>					
<i>Date Implemented:</i>	9/1/21	<i>Date Reviewed/ Revised:</i>	3/30/2026	<i>Reviewed/ Revised By:</i>	<i>Resident Services</i>

## PET VISITATION PROGRAM POLICY AND PROCEDURE

**Purpose:** Eben Ezer Lutheran Care Center (EELCC) recognizes that pets can be therapeutic for those who enjoy, and care for animals. Our goal is for elders to develop pleasant social relationships with particular pets.

**Core Policy Statement:** It is the policy of EELCC to have specific requirements for pets that will be allowed within the health care and elder home. No pets will be allowed at any EELCC without the prior approval from the Community Manager or designee. All pets and volunteers are subject to the following guidelines.

- Acceptance into the program will take place after successful completion of the pet application paperwork by the pet’s personal veterinarian. Proof of current veterinary examination and inoculations are needed. Documents can be found in the W:\Social Services Docs\Pet Verification Information.
  - Every pet owner will be required to review and agree to the policy on pets.
  - It is highly preferred that the pet be spayed or neutered. Participating animals must be clean, parasite-free (internal and external), and in good overall health. Pets that have recently had surgery or have any fresh wounds, etc., should be excused from visits until rested and healed. Pets must be well groomed, including trimmed, filed toenails, and clean teeth.
  - It shall be at the discretion of the Community Outreach Manager or designee to determine the appropriateness of any pet for the pet visitation program.
  - Pet owner volunteers should be at least 18 years of age, or accompanied by an adult. Pet owner volunteers must be clean, well groomed, and without influence of alcohol and/or drugs which may impair safety or judgment while participating in visits.

### Owner Responsibilities

- **Check with your insurance to see that visiting Eben Ezer Lutheran Care Center with your pet is covered.** Accidents happen, and you are liable for any injury sustained from your pet.
- Pets must be kept on a 4-foot or shorter leash at all times when in the home, unless there is prior approval and except when doing a formal obedience or trick demonstrations. No pinch, prong, spiked, or electronic collars are allowed.

- Pets are not allowed to jump onto a bed of any elder, nor should they be placed in an occupied chair or wheelchair unless that elder and a team member have given permission.
- If an injury to a team member, neighbor, or attendee in the home occurs during a pet visitation immediately contact the CEO or Administrator on Call (if on the weekend) and document the incident on all required forms for the home.
- While visiting with your pet in a home, be certain of the areas where you and your pet are allowed and welcomed. Always check in at the nurses' station or front desk so everyone is aware of you and your pet.
- Always clean up after your pet, inside or outside the home. Ask where a safe, outside location is where you may walk or rest your pet.
- Do not let your pet precede you down the hall, around a corner, at doorways, or doors at stairways. Stand back while waiting for an elevator door to open. When the door opens, wait for just a moment to assure safe exit of passengers. If the elevator is occupied, ask if you may enter with your pet.
- Give your verbal commands quietly. Always praise your pet for his/her exemplary behavior.
- Never leave your pet alone with team members, elders, or other visitors.
- Keep your pet well hydrated. Bring water and bowl. Folding cloths or plastic bowls are perfect for taking along on visits.
- Never force your pet to interact with an elder or force any elder to interact with your pet. This should be a pleasant experience for you, your pet, and the elders.
- You may want to find out if there is a visiting time set aside for other pets and try to avoid visiting during the same time.
- Do not let anyone (team member, or elders) pick up your pet. Only those sitting should be allowed to hold your pet, if the size allows. Injuries could occur if the pet steps on the elder.
- Be aware of medications or items that may be found on the floor.
- It is important to be aware of which elders are **allergic** to animals. Be sure that you and your pet don't approach a person with a known allergy to animals. –Check with the nurse on duty.
- Have everyone using **wheelchairs** lock wheels before you bring your pet up to them. You may find it easier to approach someone in a wheelchair from the side.
- Be alert to signs of stress in your pet and yourself. Monitor the body language of your pets for signs of stress, such as:

- Excessive Panting
- Whining/Barking
- Leaving Sweaty Paw prints
- Tail Tucked Under
- Excessive Water Drinking
- Ears Back
- Excessive Yawning
- Excessive Licking
- Willful Disobedience
- Disinterest
- Clinging to Handler

- At the discretion of the home, a volunteer and animal may be asked to temporarily or permanently refrain from further visits, if the above guidelines fail to be strictly adhered to

### **BEFORE YOUR VISIT:**

- Make sure your pet is clean and feeling well. Bathe and or brush, if necessary, before visit.
- You may want to pack a bag with items for your visit: towel, paper towels, water bowl, water (if the animal is sensitive to water from different sources), brush, I.D., any toys or simple props for tricks;
- Toilet him/her right before leaving your home or before entering the building.
- Be sure to clean up after your pet so we can maintain a clean campus.

### **The Person who is Confused:**

Visit in a quiet, distraction free environment, if possible. Simplify your topic, ask "yes," "no," or alternate choice questions. Approach the person slowly from the front, touch them before talking, and use their name periodically during the conversation. Speak clearly, not too quickly, and at eye level. Never talk about a person in their presence without including them in the conversation, or talk to them as if they were a child, patting them on the head or using baby talk. Some people may have short attention spans, watch for signs of restlessness, agitation, or tuning you out, and end the visit on a positive note with a sense of closure. Encourage reminiscence, which can serve as a source of comfort as well as an 'anchor' to a more attractive "reality". Always remember to maintain your sense of humor, and cultivate a positive, accepting attitude.

### **The Visually Impaired Person:**

When you enter the room, speak to the person, telling them who you are in a normal voice. It is helpful to describe your pet, what he looks like, his personality traits and his body expressions or posture as the visit progresses. Be sure to encourage the person to touch the pet, as tactile stimulation and touch as a means of gathering information is extremely important to the visually-impaired. Always tell the person when you are leaving, giving him a chance to give the pet a goodbye pat.

### **Hearing Impaired Persons:**

Visit in a distraction free environment, with as little background noise as possible. Don't shout; instead speak in a slow clear voice, facing the person, at eye level. Use gestures, facial expressions, and touch to facilitate understanding. Never abruptly begin a conversation- first get the person's attention by facing them and lightly touching arm or shoulder.

### **In General:**

- Be very aware of the elders' right to privacy- the issue of confidentiality is an important one- all that is seen or heard stays in the home, including elders' names, condition, etc.
- Before entering an elder's room, knock before entering and wait for an OK to enter. If the door is closed, or bedside curtain pulled around bed, do not proceed, rather return later to see if the resident is available.
- Remember, not all people like animals, and some may be afraid of them. If that is the case, politely back off. Some people enjoy looking at the pet and may enjoy watching a "trick" or two, as long as they can avoid direct contact. Volunteers need to be very sensitive to this issue.
- If you are visiting a person in bed, you can sit the pet in a chair next to the bed, on your lap next to the bed. Be careful of I.V. tubes, dressings, tubes, etc. but don't let these prevent you from a visit just by their presence. The resident who is bed ridden may be just the one who most needs a friendly visit.
- When you approach someone who is paralyzed or has an amputated limb on one side, bring the pet to the unaffected side, so the elder will be able to reach the pet easily.
- If the person you're visiting is unable to speak, or their speech is either unintelligible, or difficult to understand, resist the temptation to say "yes", nod, or pretend to understand them if you don't know what they've said. The appropriate communication strategy will vary considerably with the individual. Any of the treatment team members should be able to provide you with guidance regarding the best tack to use with the person you're visiting.
- Maintain a sense of humor and portray a positive attitude.
- Never speak to an elder as if they are a child, always be respectful and an attentive, non-judgmental listener.
- Pets should not be allowed in dining or food preparation areas. It is helpful to find out what times meals are served and avoid visiting at these times. Don't let your pet pick anything up off the floor- it may be a dropped pill or something else that is a hazard. There may be spilled food or crumbs on the floor, so you should teach him to "Leave IT!" It is generally not a good idea to encourage people to feed the pet treats. The pets soon become focused on begging for or finding food and the visit begins to revolve around food rather than interaction with elders. If someone asks if they can give the dog some food, explain that "Fido" is on a diet which is comprised of his pet food and no "people food"
- Don't assume that an elder will be unresponsive to a visit because they are sitting in a chair or in bed with their eyes shut or otherwise apparently unaware of their surroundings. We have often been pleasantly surprised at the response a pet has received from minimally interactive elders'. So, approach such individuals and gently encourage interaction. These may actually be the elders' that stand to benefit the most from your visit.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF VOLUNTEER

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (printed name of pet owner) have read through this policy and am familiar with the procedures and agree to uphold these procedures and guidelines.

Signature of Owner: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Staff Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## PET VISITATION FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's name: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Pet's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Breed: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian's name \_\_\_\_\_ phone# \_\_\_\_\_

### DATES of most recent Vaccinations and Exams

- Rabies Tag # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_
- Date of exam and results \_\_\_\_\_
- Other vaccinations date of expiration \_\_\_\_\_

### PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM

It is my opinion that \_\_\_\_\_ (dog or other pet) may participate in the Eben Ezer Lutheran Care Center Pet Program.

My comments on the dog's temperament are: \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Due to liability considerations, it is recommended the pet owner check their own insurance policy for coverage of any liability that may occur while visiting. You are liable for any injury sustained from your pet.***

*Required Document for Pet Visits  
Eben Ezer Lutheran Care Center will retain this form*

## PET VISITATION ANNUAL RENEWAL

Thank you for the joy you bring to the elders and staff with your special pet. Please have your vet complete and sign the renewal paperwork. We recommend that you share the paperwork with the veterinarian before your appointment so that there is time to read and acknowledge Eben Ezer's expectations.

Owner \_\_\_\_\_

Name of pet \_\_\_\_\_

Pet is Free of Dental Disease or Grade 1 Dental Disease

Pet is currently on a heartworm prevention plan

Pet is currently on a monthly internal parasite prevention plan; Specify Plan:

Pet is currently on an external parasite prevention plan; Specify Plan:

Pets nails are trimmed

Pets must be current on all vaccinations, including rabies, DHLPP, and Bordetella, or as advised by their veterinarian.

Giardia (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian's comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This forms needs to be returned to Shaire Chavez, Community Outreach Manager to update the pet's file. Thank you.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (printed name of pet owner) have read through this policy and am familiar with the procedures and agree to uphold these procedures and guidelines.

Date \_\_\_\_\_