

ST. LEONARD'S COMMUNITY SERVICES LONDON & REGION  
POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

	<b>Section:</b> Human Resources	<b>Policy:</b> 4.33
	<b>Subject:</b> Service Animals, Therapy Animals, Emotional Support Animals, and Pets	<b>Page 1 of 6</b>
	<b>Original Approval Date</b> April 12, 2022	<b>Last Review Date</b> April 7, 2026
	<b>Approved By</b> SLCS Executive Director	<b>Last Revision Date</b> April 7, 2026

**POLICY**

St. Leonard's Community Services (SLCS) understands that employees, visitors and program participants may require the use of service animals while working or during their time on agency premises. SLCS also recognizes that individuals receiving service can experience many benefits from the presence of an animal, whether for the purposes of service, therapy, or as a pet. Concurrently, SLCS acknowledges that, in the interest of individual safety, employee safety and infection control requirements, some restrictions are necessary when bringing animals into agency sites.

This policy outlines guidelines and procedures regarding the presence of service animals, therapy animals, emotional support animals and pets in the workplace to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all employees and visitors while complying with relevant legislation including the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. This policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers and students.

Service animals are permitted in all areas of SLCS premises that are open to the public, unless otherwise excluded by law. Individuals using service animals will not be separated from their animal, and SLCS will provide support to ensure equitable access to services.

**DEFINITIONS**

- **Service Animal** – an animal used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to their disability. A service animal may be readily identifiable (e.g. vest or harness) or supported by documentation from a regulated health professional confirming the individual requires the animal for disability-related needs.
- **Therapy Animal** – refers to an animal trained to provide comfort, affection, and support to individuals in therapeutic settings. These animals are not individually trained to perform tasks for individuals with disabilities. Unlike service animals, therapy animals do not have legal access rights to public spaces in Canada; their presence is at the discretion of the facility or organization they are visiting.
- **Emotional Support Animal** – Emotional support animals (ESA) provide companionship, comfort, and support to individuals with emotional or psychological disabilities. ESAs do not have the same legal access rights as service animals but may be considered a part of an accommodation request under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.
- **Pet** – refers to a domesticated animal kept for pleasure or companionship.

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## PROCEDURES

For reasons of liability, health and safety, only animals who meet the requirements as outlined below are allowed in any program operated by SLCS:

- Service animals for use by employees, students, volunteers, visitors, or program participants;
- A designated therapy animal;
- A designated Emotional Support Animal (ESA); and
- A pet owned by an employee.

Accommodations for an employee, student, volunteer, visitor or participant that requires the use of a therapy, emotional support or service animal shall follow the process outlined in Policy 4.03 Accommodations for Employees with Disabilities.

### Service Animals

Employees, students, volunteers and/or program participants are encouraged to provide advance notice where possible to support planning and accommodation in non-public spaces.

Where the need for a service animal is not readily apparent, SLCS may request documentation from a regulated health professional confirming that the individual requires the service animal for reasons related to a disability.

The following documentation may also be requested, where appropriate:

- A licence for their service animal, indicating registration with the applicable municipality;
- A certificate of vaccination for the service animal, indicating all vaccinations are up to date.

Where applicable, SLCS will provide community partners and other establishments with a letter of attestation, indicating the individual has provided the appropriate documentation if necessary to support access to other locations.

Visitors to SLCS will be permitted to enter designated public spaces (for example, reception areas) with their service animal. Visitors who are granted access to non-public spaces of SLCS will be required to provide proof reasonable in the circumstances attesting to their need of a service animal.

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Service animals are permitted in agency vehicles where services are being provided or accessed, unless otherwise prohibited by law. Where health and safety concerns arise, SLCS will assess and implement appropriate measures to ensure continued access to services.

### Therapy Animals

Officially certified therapy animals shall be allowed to participate in therapy programs at SLCS (e.g. St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog Program). The therapy program intent and protocol shall be documented and made available to employees and program participants in order to ensure all people involved are well informed. All considerations of liability, health and safety shall be addressed prior to introducing the therapy program or therapy animal to the workplace.

The following documents must be provided to SLCS prior to a therapy animal working on SLCS premises:

- A licence for the therapy animal, indicating registration with the applicable municipality;
- A certificate of vaccination for the therapy animal, indicating all vaccinations are up to date; and
- Documentation from a recognized therapy animal organization confirming the animal's training and suitability for providing comfort, affection, and support in therapeutic settings.

### Emotional Support Animals


Unlike service and therapy animals, emotional support animals (ESA) are not required to have specific training. However, they may be considered as part of an accommodation request under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

If an individual would like consideration of having an ESA enter a SLCS premises, prior to entry, the following documentation may be requested to inform a decision:

- A license for the ESA, indicating registration with the applicable municipality;
- A certificate of vaccination for the ESA, indicating all vaccinations are up to date; and
- Documentation from a qualified health professional confirming the individual requires the support of the animal related to a disability.

Emotional support animals are not automatically permitted in agency vehicles. Requests for inclusion of an emotional support animal in an agency vehicle will be considered on a case-by-case basis as part of the accommodation process, considering the needs of the individual, health and safety considerations, and the needs of others accessing the service.

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## Employee Pets

Employees who wish to bring their pet to the workplace must:

- Consult with their supervisor prior to bringing the pet into the workplace to ensure an appropriate plan is in place to accommodate the pet's presence;
- Have a licence indicating registration with the applicable municipality;
- Provide a certificate of vaccination for the pet, indicating all vaccinations are up to date;
- Sign HR 127 waiver that states their pet's information and their owner's responsibility towards them;
- Attest in writing that their pet is adequately trained;
- Ensure consideration is given to coworkers and participants, including those with allergies, disabilities, or sensitivities. Any competing accommodation needs will be assessed and addressed through the accommodation process; and
- Preapprove the date the pet will be in the office with their supervisor for each instance the employee intends to bring their pet into the workplace.

Pets of anyone other than employees will not be permitted access to non-public spaces within any SLCS site. For pets of others to temporarily enter public spaces, they must be under the direct control of their owner and well-behaved. Owners of pets that create a health and safety risk to others will be asked to leave SLCS premises.

Employee pets are not permitted in agency vehicles under any circumstances.

### Owner's responsibilities

Pet owners are to ensure they clean up after their pets and are solely responsible for their pet's behavior and well-being. Pet owners shall supervise their pets in the workplace or know the pet's location at all times. More specifically, they should ensure their animal doesn't:

- Make a mess
- Fight with other office pets
- Wander in prohibited places
- Endanger themselves or others
- Damage company or employee property
- Annoy coworkers (e.g. barking constantly, climbing on their desks)

As a general rule, if the pet misbehaves or becomes aggressive, their owner may be prohibited from bringing the pet to the office. The pet owner will be responsible for any expenses and cleaning resulting from their pet's behavior.

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Pet Owners shall plan work time to ensure time to care for their pets during breaks (for example, taking dogs for walks outside). They should avoid using up excessive work time to look after their pets. If a pet needs constant care and attention or the pet owner is not able to supervise their own pet, the owner shall leave the pet at home.

Areas where pets are prohibited

There are certain places and times where employee pets are prohibited, including, but not limited to:

- Kitchen or break rooms, where food is served or exposed;
- Offices of employees with allergies or those who don't wish to have the animal present;
- Places with sensitive equipment or material;
- Congregate living settings (unless pre-approved and arranged with the Program Manager); and
- Meeting rooms during meetings with participants or external parties, unless prearrangements have been made.

Where a service animal is excluded from an area by law (e.g. food preparation areas), SLCS will ensure that alternative measures are provided to enable the individual to access services.

Complaint process

All employees have the right to feel safe in their workplace. If an employee has concerns or problems resulting from a pet at work, they can follow this process:


- Talk to the pet's owner in case they can resolve the problem immediately;
- Reach out to their supervisor explaining their issues;
- Consult the HR Manager; or
- File an official complaint.

Any employee who has a medical or personal issue (e.g. allergy, phobia), shall directly contact Human Resources or a JHSC representative to explain their concern. Concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as soon as complaints are received. If they're unable to resolve the problem, they should contact the Program Manager or Human Resources Manager.

**Document Retention**

Information regarding an employee's disability or need for a service animal or ESA will be kept confidential in accordance with applicable privacy legislation. Information collected will be limited

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to what is necessary to support accommodation. Documents will be stored confidentially according to the following schedule:

- Employee, student and volunteer documents – Human Resources; and
- Clients/participants documents – corresponding program.

References: *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), Ontario Human Rights Code, Policy 4.03 Accommodations for Employees with Disabilities,*

Attachments: HR 127 Pet Liability Release Form