

North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre Policy and Procedure Manual

Human Resources

Subject	<i>Occupational Health & Safety</i>	Section:	10
		Number:	10.07
	<i>Service Animal Policy</i>	Created	Nov 2025
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Service Animal Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all visitors, clients, and staff have safe, dignified and equitable access to the building, while supporting individuals who rely on trained service animals due to disability-related needs. This policy outlines expectations, responsibilities, and procedures related to service animals entering and remaining in the facility.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, clients, and members of the public entering the premises.

3. Definition of a Service Animal

A *service animal* is an animal that is trained to perform specific tasks or functions directly related to an individual's disability. Service animals are trained to perform specific tasks related to the person's disability, such as guiding, alerting, or providing physical assistance.

This definition is consistent with applicable Ontario and federal accessibility legislation, including the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)** and the **Ontario Human Rights Code**.

Note: Emotional support animals, therapy animals, comfort animals, or pets that are not trained to perform specific disability-related tasks are not considered service animals for the purposes of this policy.

4. Documentation Requirements

To maintain safety and ensure compliance with health and building protocols, individuals accompanied by a service animal may be asked to provide **one** of the following forms of verification:

- A valid **Service Animal Identification Card** issued by a recognized training organization;
- A letter from a **regulated health professional** (e.g., doctor, nurse, psychologist, occupational therapist) confirming the individual requires the service animal for disability-related reasons;
- Visible indicators such as a harness, tags, or vest identifying the animal as a trained service animal (though staff may still request verification).

The organization will not ask for details about the individual's disability.

5. Expectations for Service Animals

Service animals entering the facility must:

- Be under the handler's **care and control** at all times (leashed, harnessed, or otherwise controlled unless the handler's disability prevents it);
- Be **well-behaved**, non-aggressive, and safe to be around the public;
- Be **housebroken** and not create sanitation concerns;
- Not block walkways, exits, or emergency routes.

6. Responsibilities of the Handler

Handlers are responsible for:

- Effective control of the service animal at all times;
- Ensuring the animal's behaviour does not pose a threat or disturbance;
- Cleaning up after the animal and addressing any accidents;
- Removing the animal from the building if it becomes disruptive, aggressive, or unmanageable and taking prompt corrective action where appropriate.

If the service animal must be removed, the individual will still be offered full access to services without the animal present.

7. Restricted Areas

Service animals are permitted in all public areas of the building, except:

- Areas where the presence of an animal is **prohibited by law** for health or safety reasons (e.g., certain food preparation zones, sterile clinical environments);
- Areas where the presence of the animal would create a demonstrable health or safety risk.

If a restriction applies, staff will work with the individual to provide alternative access.

8. Allergies or Fear of Animals

If another person in the facility raises concerns due to allergies, fear, or phobia:

- Staff will take reasonable steps to accommodate **both** parties.
- Solutions may include relocation, schedule adjustments, or use of separate spaces.
- Neither person will be denied access to services.

9. Staff Responsibilities

All staff must:

- Treat individuals with service animals with dignity and respect;
- Request documentation **only when appropriate** and in line with the policy and applicable legislation;
- Avoid petting, distracting, or interacting with the service animal;
- Report unsafe or disruptive situations to management.

10. Removal of a Service Animal

A service animal may be required to leave the building if:

- The animal behaves aggressively;
- The animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action;
- The animal is not housebroken;
- The animal's presence creates an objective and immediate health or safety risk.

Removal decisions will be based on observable behaviour or legitimate safety concerns, and not on assumptions, fear, or discomfort. Where feasible, management will be involved in the decision and the reasons for removal will be documented.

Staff must still offer the individual access to services without the animal.

11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner in response to legislative amendments, significant case law, or guidance issued by applicable accessibility or human rights authorities.

12. Duty to Accommodate

The organization recognizes its duty to accommodate persons with disabilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code to the point of undue hardship. This policy is to be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with that duty.