Let's Talk About...

Pet visits in the hospital

Your child may miss her pet while she is in the hospital. Pets can be a part of a family. Pets can help children cope with fears and provide real emotional support.

The hospital has regular visits from certified therapy animals. Certified therapy animals have been trained, recently groomed, and are accompanied by their trainer. The animals all wear identification badges just like the hospital staff.

Service animals are not considered pets. A person with a disability has the right to be accompanied by a service animal.

In special circumstances, your child's pet may be able to visit in the hospital.

When can a child have a visit from a family pet?

If your child is gravely ill or in the hospital for a long time, your healthcare providers may allow your family pet to visit your child. Talk to your healthcare providers to see if you can get permission for a pet visit. If your healthcare providers think this is OK, you need to have permission from the nurse manager, too, before your pet can visit. Have the nurse manager sign the checklist at the end of this handout.

Are there pets that may not visit?

Not all pets can come into the hospital. Pets can carry disease and they can also misbehave. Here are some ways to decide if your pet can make a hospital visit:

- Female pets cannot be "in heat" (estrus).
- Only dogs and cats can visit in the hospital and on the grounds. Rodents, reptiles, birds, fish and wild or exotic animals cannot be in or around the hospital grounds.
- If your pet is not well behaved, the pet cannot visit.
- Pets that are sick or have parasites cannot visit

What do I need to do to prepare my pet to visit?

- Before your pet can visit, you need to have permission from your child's healthcare provider and the unit manager on your child's unit. Please talk to them first. The unit manager will speak with Infection Prevention and Control to make sure this is safe for your child.
- Make sure your pet is clean and healthy. It is a good idea to have your pet groomed before a hospital visit.
- Make sure your pet's nails are trimmed.
- Make sure you have a short leash or pet carrier to bring your pet into the hospital.

Where can the pet visit my child?

Your pet can visit on the hospital grounds outside the hospital or in your child's room.

What do I need to do while my pet is at the hospital?

- Your pet is your responsibility while visiting. Do not leave the pet in your child's room without your supervision.
- Keep your pet in a pet carrier or on a short leash at all times.
- In general, animals should not jump on the bed or furniture. If you have permission from your healthcare provider to put the animal on the bed or furniture, put a barrier (like a towel or pad) between your pet and the bed or furniture.
- If your child has a surgical wound that is not healed yet, the animal cannot be on the bed. If

you don't know if it is OK, check with your child's nurse.

- Have your child wash or disinfect their hands before and after the visit.
- Pet visits should be a reasonable length of time. Pets may not stay overnight.
- If your pet has an accident while in the hospital, please clean it up. The hospital staff can give you paper towels, gloves, and disinfectant. Housekeeping will do more thorough cleanup after you.
- Please do not visit other children or other parts of the hospital with your pet.

What if I have other questions?

If you have other questions about your pet visiting in the hospital, please ask your child's nurse or the nurse manager on your child's unit.

Personal Pet Visits Primary Children's Medical Center Checklist

Parents and families: once this document is signed, keep it with you. Security or nursing staff may ask to see it when you bring your pet to the hospital.

_____ This ***Let's Talk About…Pet Visits in the Hospital*** handout has been explained to the parents.

_____ Permission was granted by the unit manager (below).

I _____ give my permission for _____ to have a visit from the family cat_____dog_____.

Unit manager signature: _____

Date: _____

(Before signing, the unit manager should make sure this is OK with the patient's healthcare provider and infection control.)

Intermountain Primary Children's Medical Center
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