New Brunswick Dental Society

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Guidelines

Animals

in a

Dental Practice

New Brunswick Dental Society

Board approved October 2026

Animals in Dental Practices

Disclaimer

This document provides guidance to NBDS members regarding service animals, emotional support animals, and facility therapy animals in dental practice settings.
It is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Dental practices must comply with applicable legislation, including the requirements of the New Brunswick Human Rights Act and other applicable laws and regulations.
Where specific legal or accommodation questions arise, NBDS recommends seeking appropriate legal advice.

Objectives

This document aims to:

1. Clarify the different types of animals that may be present in a dental practice and the circumstances under which they may be permitted.
2. Provide guidance regarding where animals may be permitted within the dental practice, taking into consideration patient safety, privacy, and infection prevention and control requirements.
3. Define roles and responsibilities for patients, animal handlers, dental professionals, staff, practice owners, and other individuals involved in the presence or management of an animal within the practice.
4. Outline infection prevention and control (IPAC) considerations related to the presence, handling, and management of animals in the dental practice.
5. Promote patient safety and animal welfare while supporting appropriate access, accommodation, and therapeutic use of animals within dental practice settings.

Structure of the Document

This document is divided into two sections:

1. Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals

Guidance applicable to NBDS members and dental practices regarding the presence and management of animals accompanying patients or other individuals.

2. Facility Therapy Animals

Guidance applicable to dental practices that choose to incorporate a facility therapy animal as part of their practice environment.

Types of Animals in a Dental Practice

Type of animal	Primary purpose	Relationship to individual	Training	General considerations
Service animal	Assist a person with a disability	Assigned to and works with a specific individual	Trained in performing specific tasks or functions related to a person's disability	May be required as an accommodation under human rights legislation. Practices should consider their applicable accommodation obligations.
Emotional support animal (ESA)	Provides emotional support or therapeutic benefit to an individual	Associated with a specific individual	May not be trained to perform specific disability-related tasks	Legal status and access rights differ from those of a service animal and depend on the circumstances. Accommodation requests should be assessed individually.
Facility therapy animal	Provides comfort, emotional support, or therapeutic benefits to patients and others within the practice	Associated with the dental practice and not assigned to one individual	Trained and assessed for its role in a healthcare/dental environment	The practice should establish policies addressing training, supervision, IPAC, patient consent, animal welfare, and management of risks and incidents.

Important Distinction

A **service animal** is trained to support a particular person with a disability and may be present in the dental practice as part of a person's accommodation.

An **emotional support animal (ESA)** provides emotional support to a particular individual. In certain circumstances, an ESA may form part of an individual's treatment or accommodation plan. Its access to a dental practice should be assessed based on the individual circumstances and applicable human rights requirements.

A **facility therapy animal** is part of the dental practice and is introduced by the practice to provide comfort or therapeutic support to patients, staff, or others. Its presence is not, by itself, an accommodation for a particular individual.

A dental practice that chooses to have a facility therapy animal should establish appropriate policies and procedures before the animal is introduced into the practice. These should address, at a minimum:

- training and suitability;
- infection prevention and control;
- allergies, phobias, and other patient concerns;
- patient information and consent;
- animal welfare;
- supervision and handler responsibilities;
- documentation; and
- management of incidents or adverse events.

Definitions

1. Service Animal

A service animal is an animal trained to perform specific tasks or functions that assist a person with a physical or mental disability.

Service animals may assist with mobility, visual or hearing impairments, seizures, autism, PTSD, and other disabilities. The specific task performed depends on an individual's disability and needs.

Service animals are working animals, not pets. They should not be approached, touched, fed, or distracted without the handler's permission. Recognized authorized handlers may assist a child or an individual who cannot independently handle the animal.

The handler is responsible for maintaining control of the animal and ensuring appropriate behaviour within the dental practice. These animals require training for safe and appropriate public access behaviour and task competency.

Service animals are **not required to wear a vest, harness, or other identification**. Identification may be helpful but is not required.

Dental practices must consider their obligations under the **New Brunswick Human Rights Act** when accommodating a person who relies on a service animal.

When questions arise regarding a service animal, members should refer to the **New Brunswick Human Rights Commission's Guideline on Accommodating People with Service Animals** and seek clarification from the Commission or appropriate legal counsel when necessary.

2. Emotional Support Animal (ESA)

An emotional support animal provides comfort or emotional support to an individual but is **not trained to perform specific disability-related tasks**, as a service animal is.

An ESA may form part of an individual's treatment or accommodation plan in certain circumstances. Its legal status and access rights differ from those of a service animal and should be considered based on the individual circumstances and applicable human rights requirements.

An ESA does not have automatic access to a dental practice. The practice should consider accommodation requests in accordance with the **New Brunswick Human Rights Act**, while also considering patient safety, allergies, infection prevention and control, and the animal's behaviour and cleanliness.

The handler is responsible for the animal's behaviour, control, and cleanliness while in the dental practice.

When questions arise regarding accommodation of an ESA, members should consult the **New Brunswick Human Rights Commission** or seek appropriate legal advice.

3. Facility Therapy Animal

A facility therapy animal is a specially trained and handled animal that provides comfort, emotional support, detect specific medical scent (cortisol, diabetes, cardiac…) and therapeutic benefits to patients, families, staff, or others within a facility such as a dental practice.

Unlike a service animal, a facility therapy animal is **not assigned to a specific individual with a disability** and does not have the same access rights as a service animal.

For the purposes of this guideline, the **NBDS recognizes only dogs as eligible facility therapy animals**.

A facility therapy dog may support the dental practice by:

- reducing patient anxiety before or during treatment;
- providing comfort to pediatric or other patients who may benefit from its presence;
- supporting emotional regulation during dental procedures;
- and contributing to a trauma-informed and patient-centred environment.

The dental practice is responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate policies and procedures governing the selection, training, supervision, health, welfare, and management of the facility therapy animal, including applicable infection prevention and control (IPAC) requirements.

Before introducing a facility therapy animal into the dental practice, the member must contact CDSPI to verify that the animal and the proposed arrangements meet the requirements of the professional liability insurance carrier, as outlined in Schedule G. The insurance carrier will provide a risk assessment and identify any applicable requirements.

Once the insurance carrier has confirmed that the requirements have been met, the facility therapy animal must be registered with the NBDS. Proper registration with the NBDS is required before the animal is introduced into the dental practice.

Part I – Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals

A. Clinical Restrictions

Service animals and emotional support animals should not enter areas of a dental practice where their presence could compromise patient safety, infection prevention and control (IPAC), or the integrity of clinical procedures.

Unless accommodation is required under applicable law, these animals should generally be restricted from the following areas:

1. Medication preparation and storage areas
2. Medical device reprocessing areas
3. Laboratory and diagnostic imaging areas, including the clinical area during radiographic procedures
4. Soiled equipment or material storage areas
5. Kitchen, food preparation, dishwashing, and food storage areas
6. Laundry areas
7. Sterile areas
8. Clean utility areas

Where a service animal is required as accommodation, the practice should assess the situation individually and consider reasonable alternatives when the animal cannot safely enter a restricted area.

The handler should maintain control of the animal and ensure that its presence does not interfere with clinical care or create a safety or IPAC concern.

B. Patient Safety and Infection Prevention

When a service animal or emotional support animal is permitted in a clinical area:

1. The animal should be positioned safely, preferably on the floor and away from the patient's face and treatment area. The animal should not create a trip, fall, or other safety hazard.
2. During procedures requiring a sterile field or enhanced infection prevention measures, appropriate drapes or barriers should be used to protect equipment and the sterile field.
3. Additional measures, such as portable HEPA filtration, may be considered where appropriate to reduce airborne allergens or dander.
4. Standard NBDS infection prevention and control requirements must continue to be followed. Clinical surfaces and equipment must be appropriately cleaned and disinfected according to established IPAC procedures.
5. Wounds, catheters, medical devices, or other areas requiring protection should be appropriately covered and protected from contact with the animal.
6. The presence of an animal may need to be temporarily restricted during an infectious disease outbreak or other circumstance requiring additional infection prevention measures. For service animals, any restriction should be considered in accordance with applicable accommodation requirements and New Brunswick Human Rights Commission guidance.

Patient safety, infection prevention and control, and animal welfare should be considered whenever an animal is present in a dental practice.

C. Non-Discrimination

Dental practices must not discriminate against a person because they rely on a service animal.

Accordingly:

- Individuals accompanied by a service animal should be permitted access to areas of the practice that are normally available to the public, subject to applicable accommodation requirements and legitimate health and safety considerations.
- A person should not be refused or provided with a reduced level of service because of the presence of a service animal.
- Staff and other individuals should not harass, interfere with, or unnecessarily restrict a person because they are accompanied by a service animal.
- Concerns regarding a service animal should be addressed respectfully with the handler and managed in accordance with applicable human rights and accommodation requirements.

For questions regarding accommodation, members should consult the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission.

D. Balancing Accommodation Needs

Dental practices may need to balance the needs of a person who relies on a service animal with the needs of other patients or staff, including individuals with allergies, phobias, or other legitimate concerns.

Where competing accommodation needs arise, the practice should work with the individuals involved to identify reasonable solutions that allow access to care while addressing health, safety, and other accommodation concerns.

Each situation should be assessed individually and in accordance with applicable human rights and accommodation requirements.

For assistance with complex accommodation situations, members should consult the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission.

E. Alternative Arrangements

For procedures where an animal cannot safely remain in the treatment area, such as surgical procedures or procedures involving sedation, the dental practice should discuss appropriate alternative arrangements with the patient or handler.

Considerations may include:

- ensuring the animal is safely cared for and appropriately supervised;
- identifying a suitable location outside the restricted clinical area; and
- planning in advance when the procedure involves sedation, surgery, or other circumstances where the patient may be unable to manage the animal. Authorized handlers can provide assistance.

For service animals, any alternative arrangement should be consistent with the practice's duty to accommodate under applicable human rights legislation.

Members should refer to the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission's Guideline on Accommodating People with Service Animals, particularly the section addressing the duty to accommodate, when determining appropriate arrangements.

F. Emergency Protocols

Dental practices should have procedures in place to safely manage a service animal during a medical or dental emergency.

Where the service animal is important to the patient's safety or well-being, staff should make reasonable efforts to keep the animal with the patient when safe and practicable, while ensuring that emergency care is not delayed or compromised.

Patient safety, emergency response, infection prevention and control, and the safety of staff and the animal should be prioritized.

G. Training and Awareness

Dental practices should ensure that staff understand the appropriate management of service animals and emotional support animals within the practice.

Staff awareness should include:

- respecting the animal's role and avoiding unnecessary interaction or distraction;
- understanding basic accommodation responsibilities;
- recognizing potential safety and infection prevention and control concerns; and
- knowing how to respond appropriately when questions or concerns arise.

Staff should be familiar with the practice's policies and procedures and know when to seek guidance from the practice owner or the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission.

H. Documentation and Communication

- The patient chart should indicate when a service animal or emotional support animal is present during treatment, when relevant to the patient's care or the safe management of the animal.
- Any significant interaction involving the animal that may affect treatment, safety, or infection prevention and control should be documented in the patient chart.
- Staff involved in the patient's care should be informed in advance, where practicable, when an animal will be present so that appropriate safety and IPAC measures can be implemented.
- Documentation should remain factual and should not include unnecessary information about the patient's disability or medical condition.

I. Legal Protections

Service animals and their handlers are protected under the New Brunswick Human Rights Act. Dental practices have a legal duty to consider reasonable accommodation for individuals who rely on a service animal.

The New Brunswick Human Rights Commission provides guidance regarding service animals, accommodation, and the responsibilities of service providers.

Members should consult the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission – Guideline on Accommodating People with Service Animals when questions arise regarding access, accommodation, or restrictions involving a service animal.

Part II – Facility Therapy Animals

A. Practical Considerations for Implementation

A dental practice that chooses to have a facility therapy dog should ensure that the dog is suitable for a clinical environment and is appropriately trained, healthy, well-groomed, calm, and under the control of a designated handler.

The practice should establish policies addressing:

- patient safety and comfort;
- infection prevention and control (IPAC);
- allergies and fear of dogs;
- patient communication and consent;
- appropriate areas of access;
- handler responsibilities;
- animal health and welfare;
- staff training;
- emergency and incident management; and
- documentation and reporting.

The presence of the facility therapy dog should not interfere with the delivery of dental care or compromise applicable IPAC requirements.

Patients should be informed that a facility therapy dog is present in the practice and should be offered reasonable alternatives if they do not wish to interact with the dog.

B. Requirements for a Facility Therapy Dog

The dental practice should:

1. Ensure the dog has appropriate training and have been cleared by CDSPI (schedule G) and is registered with the NBDS in accordance with this guideline (see Annex C).

2. Maintain appropriate veterinary care, vaccinations, parasite prevention, grooming, and health monitoring.
3. Maintain appropriate documentation of training, health, and vaccination status.
4. Establish procedures for daily inspection of the dog for signs of illness, injury, parasites, or other conditions that could affect its suitability to work.
5. Remove the dog from patient interaction if it is ill, injured, excessively stressed, aggressive, or otherwise unsuitable to work.
6. Maintain appropriate cleaning and disinfection procedures for items used by the dog, including blankets, toys, beds, and other equipment.
7. Provide the dog with appropriate access to water, food, rest periods, and a designated area away from patient treatment areas.
8. Maintain a daily activity log documenting the dog's presence and patient interactions.

The dental practice should not:

- allow the dog to interfere with patient treatment or clinical procedures;
- allow the dog in restricted clinical areas, including reprocessing and sterile areas;
- allow the dog to sit on a patient's dental chair or lap during treatment unless this is the only way to decrease anxiety unless no other options are available and this is for extreme situation and IPAC standard must not be compromised
- allow patients to feed the dog treats;
- permit licking of patients or contact with wounds, mucous membranes, medical devices, or treatment sites; or
- permit interaction when the dog's behaviour or health presents a safety or IPAC concern.

C. Patient Information, Consent and Interaction

Patients should be informed when booking an appointment that a facility therapy dog is present in the practice.

The practice should provide a patient consent form (Annex A) that:

- identifies the presence of the facility therapy dog;
- allows the patient to indicate whether they wish to interact with the dog;
- provides information regarding expected conduct around the dog (Annex B); and
- is documented in the patient record.

Consent should be confirmed at each appointment where interaction with the facility therapy dog is anticipated.

Patients should never be pressured to interact with the dog and may decline interaction at any time.

Permission should be obtained from the patient before the handler facilitates an interaction with the dog. Patients should also be instructed not to approach or interact with the dog without permission from the handler.

D. Patients with Allergies, Phobias or Other Concerns

A notice should be displayed in the reception area indicating that a facility therapy dog is part of the dental practice.

Where a patient has an allergy, fear of dogs, or another concern, the practice should make reasonable arrangements to minimize contact or provide an alternative arrangement where appropriate.

The facility therapy dog should be separated from patients who do not wish to interact with it.

The practice should consider applicable human rights and accommodation requirements when a competing accommodation need involves a service animal.

Where accommodation is required by law, the practice must comply with its legal obligations under applicable human rights legislation.

E. Clinical and IPAC Restrictions

The clinical restrictions applicable to animals in dental practices should also apply to facility therapy dogs.

Facility therapy dogs should not enter:

- medical device reprocessing areas;
- medication preparation and storage areas;
- laboratory and diagnostic imaging areas;
- soiled equipment or material storage areas;
- clean utility areas;
- laundry areas;
- food preparation and storage areas; or
- other areas where the presence of an animal could compromise patient safety or IPAC requirements.

A facility therapy dog may be present in a dental operatory when appropriate, provided that its presence does not interfere with treatment or compromise IPAC requirements.

The dog should remain on the floor, or in a designated area, away from the patient's treatment area whenever possible. The dog should not be placed on the dental chair or patient's lap during treatment unless the dog helps with anxiety. Proper barriers should be available and in place.

Facility therapy dogs should generally not be permitted in surgical or sterile areas.

F. Code of Conduct

The following practices should apply whenever a facility therapy dog is present:

1. Hand hygiene should be performed before and after interaction with the dog.
2. The dog should not lick patients, staff, equipment, wounds, or mucous membranes.
3. Patients should not feed the dog.
4. The dog should be regularly inspected for illness, parasites, wounds, or other conditions that could affect its suitability to work.
5. The dog should receive appropriate veterinary care, vaccinations, parasite prevention, and health monitoring.
6. The dog should not be fed raw meat.
7. The dog should be appropriately groomed and maintained.
8. The handler should always maintain control of the dog.
9. The dog should remain in an appropriate location during clinical procedures.
10. Interaction with the dog should never interfere with patient care.
11. Equipment used by the dog should be maintained and cleaned appropriately. Products used for cleaning animal equipment should be suitable for that purpose.

The practice should establish procedures, with veterinary input where appropriate, for assessing the dog's health and suitability to work.

G. Identification

A facility therapy dog should be readily identifiable through an appropriate harness, vest, or other identification indicating that it is a facility therapy dog.

Identification is recommended but does not replace the requirements for appropriate training, registration, supervision, and documentation.

H. Training and Staff Awareness

All staff members should receive appropriate training regarding the facility therapy dog and the practice's policies.

Training should include:

1. The role and purpose of the facility therapy dog.
2. Appropriate interaction and handling.
3. The dog's location during different clinical procedures.
4. Patient safety and IPAC requirements.
5. Allergies, phobias, and patient preferences.
6. Animal health, welfare, and signs of stress.
7. Emergency and incident procedures.
8. Patient communication and consent.
9. Legal and ethical considerations.
10. Documentation and reporting requirements.

I. Handler Responsibilities

The designated handler should:

- always maintain control of the dog;
- ensure that the dog is fit and suitable to work each day;
- monitor the dog's behaviour and stress level;
- ensure appropriate rest periods, water, and access to its designated resting area;
- manage the dog's biological needs;
- prevent unwanted interaction with patients, staff, or equipment;
- ensure that the dog does not interfere with clinical care; and
- remove the dog from patient interaction when a safety, health, behavioural, or IPAC concern arises.

J. Dentist/Practice Owner Responsibilities

Responsibilities toward patients

The dentist/practice owner should:

1. Prioritize patient safety and quality of care.
2. Inform patients that a facility therapy dog is present in the practice.
3. Ensure that information about the facility therapy dog is clear in practice communications and external marketing.
4. Obtain and document patient consent for interaction where applicable.
5. Respect a patient's decision not to interact with the dog.
6. Ensure that appropriate alternatives are available when reasonably required.

Where accommodation is required under the New Brunswick Human Rights Act, the practice must comply with its legal obligations.

Responsibilities toward the facility therapy dog

The dentist/practice owner should:

1. Ensure the dog is treated with dignity and appropriate care.
2. Ensure the dog is fit to work and has appropriate rest periods.
3. Ensure veterinary needs are met.
4. Maintain appropriate documentation of training and vaccination.
5. Provide appropriate food, water, rest, and downtime.
6. Maintain appropriate cleaning and storage procedures for the dog's equipment.
7. Ensure that the dog's welfare is considered when determining the duration and frequency of patient interactions.

Responsibilities toward dental staff

The practice should:

1. Have written procedures governing interaction with the facility therapy dog.
2. Have emergency and crisis management procedures.
3. Have procedures for documenting and reporting incidents or unforeseen events.
4. Ensure staff know the practice's insurer reporting requirements following an incident involving the dog.
5. Report incidents to the NBDS Registrar where required under this guideline. (see Annex D). Example of incidents can be found in (Annex E).

K. Emergency and Incident Management

The practice should have procedures for responding to incidents involving the facility therapy dog, including:

- bites or attempted bites;
- scratches or other injuries;
- falls or other accidents;
- allergic reactions;
- contamination of clinical areas;
- animal illness or injury;
- unexpected or aggressive behaviour; and
- any other event that could affect patient or staff safety.

Incidents should be documented according to the practice's incident reporting procedure.

Where this guideline requires reporting to the NBDS Registrar, the incident should be submitted in accordance with Annex D – Facility Dog Unforeseen Event Report Form.

The practice must also follow its insurer's requirements for reporting incidents involving the facility therapy dog.

L. Facility Therapy Dog Registration with the NBDS

A dental practice that chooses to have a facility therapy dog should notify the NBDS Registrar and complete the Facility Therapy Animal Registration Form (Annex C).

The practice should maintain and provide, upon request, documentation relating to:

- the dog's identification;
- training and suitability;
- veterinary health and vaccination status;
- designated handler(s);
- practice policies and procedures;
- staff training; and
- incident reporting.

The practice should ensure that the facility therapy dog continues to meet the expectations of this guideline throughout its participation in the practice.

Insurance Approval Process

The approval process established by CDSPI is as follows:

1. The dentist must contact a CDSPI advisor and indicate their intention to have a therapy animal in their dental practice.
2. The advisor will provide the dentist with a questionnaire to complete. See Attach Schedule G
3. Once the complete questionnaire is received, the advisor will submit it to the insurance underwriting department for review.
4. The underwriting department will confirm whether an extension of liability coverage will be granted. It will also advise whether any additional premiums may apply in the future.
5. If approved, the advisor will provide the dentist with an endorsement document confirming the extension of liability coverage. The dentist must retain this document for their records.
6. The dentist will provide a copy of the endorsement document to the NBDS as confirmation of insurance approval and proceed to register the animal with the NBDS.

Schedule G – Therapy Animal Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions regarding the presence and management of therapy dogs in your dental practice. This information needs to be sent to CDSPI for approval.

A. Presence and Location

1. How frequently will the therapy dog be present in the clinic?
2. Will it be present on specific days or during designated hours?
3. In which areas of the clinic will the therapy dog be permitted?
4. How many therapy dogs will be present at any time in the office?
5. Name the dental clinics where the therapy dog will be present.

B. Certification and Training

6. Is the therapy dog certified by a recognized therapy animal organization? If so, please identify the organization.
7. Is the handler certified or trained to work with therapy animals? If so, please identify the organization or training program.
8. Have all relevant staff members received instructions on interacting with the therapy dog and responding to incidents?
9. Are the dog's health, vaccination and temperament records maintained and kept up to date?

C. Clinic Procedures and Management

10. How will patients be informed that a therapy dog may be present in the clinic? Select all applicable methods:
    - Signage in the clinic
    - Email or other written communication
    - Verbal notification when booking an appointment
    - Other (please specify)
11. What procedures are in place to accommodate patients who have allergies, a fear of dogs or other concerns?
12. What arrangements are in place for the dog's feeding, toileting, containment and other needs to ensure that infection prevention and control requirements are maintained?
13. How will the clinic document the presence of the therapy dog, its interactions with patients and any incidents that may occur?

NBDS Position

The NBDS supports the appropriate use of facility therapy dogs in dental practices, provided that patient safety, animal welfare, infection prevention and control, and applicable legal requirements are respected.

1. Dental practices in New Brunswick must follow the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission's guidance on accommodating people with service animals and comply with their legal duty to accommodate under applicable human rights legislation.
2. Dental practice owners should consult their professional liability insurer regarding coverage and potential risks associated with having a facility therapy dog in the practice. Members should follow any applicable insurer requirements. Only animals approved by CDSPI will be recognized by the NBDS.
3. The NBDS recognizes and supports facility therapy dogs only under this guideline.
4. A facility therapy dog should be appropriately trained and assessed for its role in a dental practice, including appropriate behaviour, obedience, temperament, and interaction with patients.
5. A facility therapy dog should wear a clearly identifiable working vest or harness while working in the dental practice.
6. A facility therapy dog should be vaccinated, in good health, and receive regular veterinary care. The practice should maintain appropriate documentation of the dog's health and vaccination status.
7. A facility therapy dog should be appropriately groomed and maintained to minimize hygiene, allergen, and infection prevention concerns.
8. The dental practice should have a written protocol addressing staff education, patient information, handling, appropriate interaction, restrictions, and management of exceptional or emergency situations involving the facility therapy dog.
9. Appropriate signage should clearly identify the presence of a facility therapy dog within the dental practice.
10. The dental practice should have procedures for documenting and reporting unforeseen events involving the facility therapy dog to the NBDS and, where applicable, to the practice's insurer.
11. The NBDS supports the appropriate use of facility therapy dogs as a means of providing comfort and therapeutic support to patients and potentially improving the accessibility and experience of dental care for some individuals.
12. Dental practices should establish documented criteria for the selection, training, temperament, health, suitability, and ongoing assessment of a facility therapy dog.

Supportive documentation

Guideline on Accommodating People with Service Animals
New Brunswick Human Rights Commission
Guideline on Accommodating People with Service Animals (PDF)

Accommodating people with Service Animals in NB
EN SERVICE ANIMAL HANDOUT (PLAIN LANGUAGE PROJECT)

Annex A

New Brunswick Dental Society
Société Dentaire du Nouveau-Brunswick

Consent Form for the Presence of a Facility Therapy Dog

Consent for a Facility Therapy Dog

This consent form acknowledges that the patient has been informed about the presence of a facility therapy dog within the facility and understands its role in providing comfort and support in the dental practice.

Consent Agreement:

- I acknowledge that a facility therapy dog is present in this facility to provide comfort and support to patients.
- I understand that the facility therapy dog is trained to adhere to strict behavioural standards and should not interfere with the care and services provided to me.
- I agree to respect the role of the facility therapy dog in this facility and will not engage with it unless invited by the handler or facility staff.
- I understand that the practice takes measures to maintain hygiene and safety, and that proper cleaning protocols are followed in spaces where the facility therapy dog is present.
- In the event of any allergies or concerns related to the presence of the facility therapy dog, I agree to notify the facility staff immediately for appropriate accommodation.
- I accept the code of conduct with the facility therapy dog. (Annex B)

Patient Acknowledgment:

I, the undersigned, confirm that I have read and understood the above information regarding the presence of a facility therapy dog. I consent to its presence as described in this form and that at any time I can opt out of this consent.

☐ I wish to interact with the facility therapy dog ☐ I don't wish to interact with the facility therapy dog

Patient Name: _____

Patient Signature: _____

Witness signature: _____

Parent/guardian signature
(if the patient is a minor) : _____

Date: _____

Annex B

Code of Conduct for the Presence of a Facility Therapy Dog
Code of Conduct

To promote patient safety, infection prevention and control, and the welfare of the facility therapy dog, the following guidelines should be followed:

a) **Hand hygiene:** Patients, the facility therapy dog handler, and dental team members should perform hand hygiene before and after interaction with the dog.

b) **Saliva and mucous membranes:** Patients should avoid direct contact with the dog's saliva and mucous membranes. The dog should not be permitted to lick patients.

c) **Treats:** Patients should not be offered the opportunity to feed treats to the facility therapy dog.

d) **Health inspection:** The dog should be visually inspected regularly for fleas, ticks, skin conditions, open wounds, or other signs of illness before participating in patient interactions.

e) **Veterinary care:** The dog should receive regular veterinary examinations and remain current with recommended vaccinations and parasite prevention.

f) **Feeding:** The dog should not be fed raw meat while participating in the facility therapy program.

g) **Licking:** The handler should prevent the dog from licking patients, particularly the face, wounds, mucous membranes, or medical devices.

h) **Grooming:** The dog should be clean and appropriately groomed before entering the dental practice. Regular grooming should be maintained to minimize dander, dirt, and other potential hygiene concerns.

i) **Claw protection:** Where appropriate, the practice may consider measures to reduce the risk of scratches or damage to dental furniture. Socks or other protective devices should only be used when the dog has been appropriately trained and is comfortable wearing them.

j) **Location:** The facility therapy dog should remain on the floor whenever possible. If the practice permits the dog to be closer to the patient, a clean blanket or other suitable barrier provided by the dental team should be used.

k) **Handler control:** The designated handler should always maintain control of the dog and take appropriate measures to prevent accidental bites, scratches, jumping, or other unwanted contact.

l) **Patient care:** Interaction with the facility therapy dog should never interfere with dental treatment, patient safety, infection prevention and control, or the normal operation of the dental practice.

m) **Patient choice:** Patients should be informed that a facility therapy dog is present and should be free to decline interaction with the dog without affecting their care.

Annex C

NEW BRUNSWICK DENTAL SOCIETY · NBDS

Registration Form

Facility Therapy Dog in a Dental Practice

Please print clearly and complete all sections. Return the completed form to the NBDS.

1 Handler Information *The person responsible for the therapy animal*

HANDLER'S FULL NAME		NAME OF THE DENTIST RESPONSIBLE	
POSITION / ROLE IN THE DENTAL CLINIC	NBDS MEMBERSHIP NO.	EMAIL	PHONE

2 Dental Facility Information *List all dental facilities where the therapy animal will be present*

#	NAME OF DENTAL FACILITY	ADDRESS	CITY / PROV. / POSTAL CODE	PHONE / EMAIL
1				
2				
3				
4				

NUMBER OF THERAPY DOGS PRESENT AT THE CLINIC(S)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ Other: _____

3 Animal Information *Identification of the therapy animal*

ANIMAL'S NAME	BREED	SEX ☐ Male ☐ Female	DATE OF BIRTH *DD / MM / YYYY*
DISTINGUISHING MARKS	MICROCHIP / TATTOO NO.		CERTIFICATION DATE *DD / MM / YYYY*

4 Health & Veterinary Information

VETERINARIAN (NAME / CLINIC / PHONE)	VACCINATIONS — DATE *DD / MM / YYYY*	ANTIPARASITIC TREATMENT — DATE *DD / MM / YYYY*
ALLERGIES / SPECIAL CONDITIONS		

5 Declaration and Signatures

I declare that the information above is accurate and complete, and I undertake to report any changes to the NBDS.

HANDLER'S SIGNATURE	RESPONSIBLE DENTIST'S SIGNATURE
DATE: _____ / _____ / _____	DATE: _____ / _____ / _____

FOR NBDS / SDNB USE ONLY

NBDS Dog number:	RECEIVED BY	CDSPI APPROVED ☐ Yes ☐ No	DATE *DD / MM / YYYY*
APPROVAL STATUS ☐ Approved ☐ Pending ☐ Refused			DATE *DD / MM / YYYY*

Annex D

New Brunswick Dental Society
Société Dentaire du Nouveau-Brunswick

Facility Dog Unforeseen Event Report Form

General Information

- Date of Event:
- Time of Event:
- Location:
- Name of Facility Dog:
- Name of Handler:

Description of Event

- Brief Description of the Incident:

- Was anyone harmed (human or dog)?
- Details of Harm/Injury (if applicable):

Action Taken

- Immediate Actions Taken (Annex E)
- Who was notified (e.g., supervisor, medical personnel)?

- Follow-up Actions Planned:

Witnesses

- Name: phone #:
- Name: phone #:

Additional Notes

- Relevant Background Information:

- Other Observations:

Patient affected:
Signature of handler: Date:
Name of the person completing this report: email:
Title of this person:

(this report must be submitted to the NBDS office of the registrar at registrar@nbdent.ca) and a copy should also be sent to your insurance company.

Annex E **Facility Therapy Animal — Incident Classification Guide**

This guide provides examples to assist dental facilities in determining the appropriate response to incidents involving a facility therapy animal.

Classification	Examples	Immediate action	Documentation / Follow-up
Routine concern	Patient is uncomfortable around the animal; patient requests that the animal not approach; animal becomes mildly distracted or excited but remains under control.	Respect the patient's request and move or remove the animal as appropriate.	Document only if required by the facility's procedures or if the concern indicates a recurring issue.
Documented incident	Minor scratch without broken skin; animal jumps on a person without injury; minor property damage; animal has an accident in the facility; animal enters an area where it is not permitted.	Remove the animal from the immediate situation and address any cleaning, safety, or patient concerns.	Document the incident and assess whether corrective measures are required.
Serious incident	Bite; scratch that breaks the skin; fall or injury caused by the animal; significant allergic or respiratory reaction; aggressive behaviour; significant contamination involving bodily fluids; animal becomes ill or injured; repeated loss of control.	Immediately remove the animal from patient contact. Provide appropriate first aid and arrange medical or veterinary assessment when necessary.	Complete an incident report. Assess whether the animal requires behavioural, veterinary, or other evaluation before returning to patient contact. Contact CDSPI and Report to NBDS
Emergency	Serious injury; severe allergic or respiratory reaction; animal seriously injures a person; animal escapes and presents a safety risk; animal interferes with an emergency response or evacuation; exposure to a potentially hazardous substance.	Activate the appropriate emergency procedure. Call 911 when indicated. Ensure the safety of the patient, staff, public, and animal.	Complete a detailed incident report and conduct a documented review. Notify the CDPSI and NBDS for review of the incident.

General Principles

- Patient safety takes priority. A patient must not be required to interact with or remain in proximity to a therapy animal.
- The animal must always remain under appropriate control.
- The animal should be removed from patient contact whenever its behaviour, health, or the circumstances create a safety or infection-control concern.
- A single minor incident does not necessarily mean that the animal is unsuitable for the facility. The response should consider the severity of the incident, the circumstances, and whether there is a pattern of similar events.
- Repeated or escalating incidents require reassessment of the animal's suitability, the level of supervision, and the conditions under which the animal is permitted to interact with patients.
- The facility should have clearly identified responsibility for managing the animal and responding to incidents.
- The welfare of the animal must also be considered. Signs of fear, stress, fatigue, illness, or distress should result in the animal being removed from patient interaction and appropriately assessed.
- Report any incidents to the NBDS using the form in Annex D and report the incident to your insurance company. Documentation is required in the patient chart.