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Brief Overview of Service Animals and the Laws in Vermont

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Integrating Service Animals into Medical Practice: A Guide for Physicians and Healthcare Workers

Lara Murnik

Rotation 7: Family Medicine

Milton Family Medicine

Problem Identification

- There is a considerable lack of understanding about service animals in the following ways
 - Utility and services they provide
 - Law and regulations regarding access and accommodations
 - Differentiation between various types of support animals



Public Health Cost and Unique Cost Considerations

- There is very little data available regarding service animal use and healthcare costs
- Service and support animals can be tremendous tools to help not only patients but health systems in general
 - Patients with PTSD reported improvements in mood, loneliness, and safety [Stern]



Community Perspective and Support

- Back of house staff (nurses, LNA's, physicians)
 - "I'm not sure when I [a PCP] should intervene and suggest a service animal" - MD #1, Milton Family Practice
 - "I don't know the difference between service dogs or emotional support or therapy dogs" - MD #2, Milton Family Practice
- Front of house staff (receptionists, schedulers)
 - "I don't feel comfortable asking someone about this"





Intervention and Methodology

- Created short informational flyers for around the office setting for the following information
 - Types of assistance animals and their legal protections
 - Standardized questions to ask those who present with a service animal
- Created housing request template/ dot-phrase for Epic

Result/Response



- Receptionists and schedulers
 - Implemented flyer with various types of support animals and roles/limitations/legal protections allowed by each role category
 - Included standardized questionnaire to ask patients with service animals
- Physicians, nurses, and support staff
 - Elucidated various types of assistance animals
 - Created standardized letters of support for housing letter requests

Evaluation of Effectiveness

- Receptionists and schedulers
 - Front desk staff stated that this was helpful and that they would likely use these documents in the future
- Physicians, nurses, and support staff
 - All physicians interviewed/consulted for this project stated that this was “helpful” and said that they would utilize these postures and housing form



Recommendations for Future Projects/ Interventions

- Further rules and guidelines to be implemented on a hospital or state and national level
- Research on states of health and healthcare utilization before and after addition of an assistance animal to the treatment team
- Research into efficacy of service animal intervention at monitoring disease and improving outcomes and quality of life



References



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- [Frequently Asked Questions about Service Animals and the ADA](#)
- [Service Animals | Beta.ADA.gov](#)
- [Fake Service Dog Laws: Protecting working service dogs - Orvis News](#)