

Pet Policy – White Paper

Federal regulations for nursing homes do not require facilities to allow pets or even address pets. Under Ohio Licensure law, residents of nursing homes and residential care facilities may keep pets if allowed by facility policy. If a nursing home allows residents to keep animals or pets, or has facility pets, the facility must, in consultation with the medical director and a veterinarian licensed to practice veterinary medicine, develop and implement a written protocol regarding animals and pets that protects the health and safety and rights of residents. At minimum, the written protocol must include:

- (1) An annual physical examination, including an examination for internal and external parasites;
- (2) Vaccinations for common infectious agents, including rabies;
- (3) Any other preventive care necessary to protect the health, safety and rights of residents;
- (4) Procedure to follow if an animal:
 - (a) Bites a person; or
 - (b) Becomes ill or injured;
- (5) For resident pets, if the resident is transferred, discharged or otherwise unable to care for the pet, responsibilities for care of the pet until a family member or sponsor can retrieve the pet;
- (6) In the case of a facility pet, the name of the designated member or members of the staff responsible for the care of the animal and for maintaining the protocol, including medical records for the animal; and
- (7) An evaluation of the medical needs of residents.¹

Policy/Process Considerations

- If the facility does not allow pets to reside in the facility but allows pets/animals to visit, develop a policy that addresses visiting pets, which should include, but not be limited to:
 - Prior to the animal visit a pet registration form should be completed with documentation of an initial health screening.
 - Set forth standards for visitation (times, frequency, etc.) and expectations of pet behavior.
 - Address who is responsible for any pet accidents.
 - Ability for facility to deny or revoke permission for the pet to visit for any reason.
- Specific to RCF's: Ensure fees associated with having a pet reside with the resident is included in the admission agreement.

Educational Considerations

- Training of all staff and residents on all policies and procedures.

¹ O.A.C. 3701-17-09(D) and 3701-16-11(D)