

# Wisconsin HAI Education Series

**June 25, 2026**



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT  
*of* HEALTH SERVICES



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*of* HEALTH SERVICES

# Infection Prevention Can Be Ruff

A Look at Animals in Health Care

**Nikki Mueller, MLS(ASCP)<sup>CM</sup>, MBA, CIC, FAPIC**

Infection Preventionist

Wisconsin Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAI) Prevention Program

# Disclaimer

- The Wisconsin HAI Prevention Program is non-regulatory.
- There is no affiliation with any facilities or products.
- All content is based on current guidance and best practices.
- No financial disclosures.

# Objectives



Define the different animal classifications that may be seen in a health care facility.



Identify examples of zoonotic diseases that may be transmitted when animals are in a health care facility.



Describe techniques and tools that may be used to mitigate transmission of communicable and zoonotic diseases.

# Animals in Health Care



# Role of Animals in Health Care

**Studies show that animals aid in:**

- Increased interaction with others.
- Reduced stress and anxiety.
- Decreased blood pressure.



# Animal Assisted Interventions



Visitation



Animal-assisted activities (AAA)



Animal-assisted therapy (AAT)



Service functions

# Visitation



## Pet visitations:

- Can provide comfort and aid in well-being of patient or resident.
- Are often allowed for people who are long-term or terminally ill.

# Animal-Assisted Activities



- Can provide recreation, motivation, and education.
- Are not directed at specific therapeutic goals.
- Can be done one on one or in a group setting.

# Animal-Assisted Therapy



- Is directed toward specific goals as part of the treatment process.
- Is facilitated by therapist or health care professional.
- Is used to improve cognitive, emotional, physical, and social functions.

# Service Functions



- Guiding people who are visually or hearing impaired.
- Alerting or protecting people who have seizures.
- Calming people with stress or anxiety disorders.
- Reminding people to take medication.

# Animal Classifications



# Classifications



Personal pet



Facility animals



Service animals



Emotional support animals

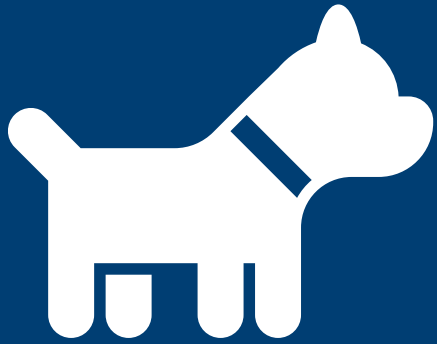


Therapy animals



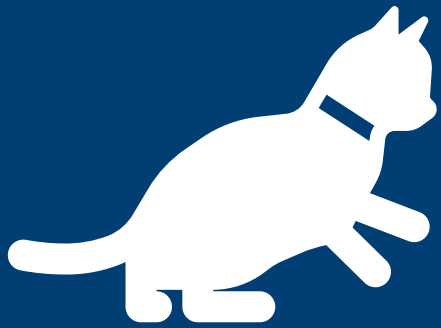
Miscellaneous

# Personal Pet



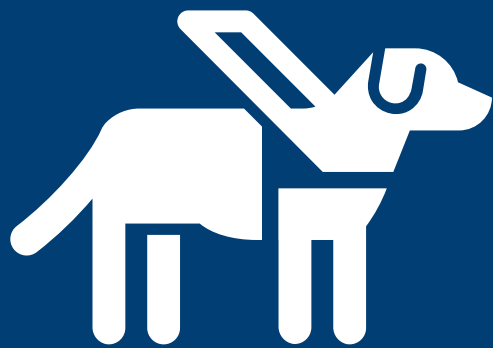
- Allowed to visit with the owner, handler, and assisting staff only.
- Not evaluated for temperament and obedience.
- Cared for by the resident or the family, not facility staff.

# Facility Animals



- May be enjoyed by all residents, patients, and staff in the facility.
- Should be cared for by the facility.

# Service Animals



- Often dogs trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability.
- Regulated under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Allowed to accompany people in public areas even if animals are prohibited.

# Emotional Support Animals (ESA)



- May be any species of animal that provides support through companionship.
- Are **not** service animals defined under the ADA.
- Must be “prescribed” to be legally considered ESA.

# Therapy Animals



- Must tolerate new people and places.
- Must be registered or certified for AAA/AAT.
- Have no housing or travel protections.

# Miscellaneous



- Not therapy animals or part of other categories.
- Not certified or licensed.
- Cared for by their owners.

# Risks Associated with Animals



# Potential Risks

- **Zoonosis (zoonotic illnesses)**
- Allergies
- Phobias
- Animal-caused injuries

# Zoonosis

- Defined as the transmission of disease **between animals and humans.**
- Animals can **transmit** infectious diseases to humans and vice versa.
- There are more than 200 known zoonotic illnesses; only about **35 are of concern** with AAA or AAT.

# Zoonotic Illnesses

- **Salmonellosis** (poultry, birds)
- **Ringworm** (cats, dog, horses, cattle, rabbits)
- **Pasteurellosis** (dogs, cats, rabbits, rodents)
- **Q fever** (cats, dogs, goats, cattle, rabbits)
- **Tularemia** (cats, dogs, rabbits, horses, sheep)
- **Multidrug resistant organisms (MDROs)**
- Many, many more!

# Zoonotic Transmission

Transmission can occur  
through:

- Contact.
- Droplet.
- Airborne.
- Vectors, such as fleas.
- Food or water.



# Infection Prevention is Key



# Animal Guidelines and Policies

**Facilities need to have a policy that covers:**

- Animal guidelines.
- Infection prevention.
- Patient suitability.
- Safety.
- Handlers and volunteers.
- Animal visitation, AAA, and AAT.

# Animal Guidelines

**Animal guidelines should ensure that all animals are:**

- Healthy.
- Immunized.
- Even-tempered.
- Greater than one year of age.
- Well-trained.
- Clean and well maintained.

# Infection Prevention

**Infection prevention policies should focus on:**

- Hand hygiene.
- Cleaning and disinfection.
- Environmental cleanliness.

# Hand Hygiene

## Hand hygiene best practices include:

- Washing hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub before and after contact with animals.
- Ensuring all who come in contact with animals including patients, residents, staff, and handlers practice hand hygiene.

# Patient Suitability

**When determining patient or resident suitability consider excluding people who:**

- Have open wounds.
- Have open tracheotomies.
- Are immunosuppressed.
- Are on transmission-based precautions or isolation.
- Have active infections such as tuberculosis, salmonella, or ringworm.

# Safety

## Safety guidelines should include:

- Ensuring animals used for AAA and AAT undergo temperament testing by a person or group who is experienced in assessing animal behavior.
- Requiring AAA/AAT program coordinator obtain verification that the animal has had temperament evaluation.

# Handler and Volunteer

## Guidelines for handlers and volunteers should include:

- Prohibiting the handler or the animal from visiting if either are ill.
- Ensuring that there is one animal per handler.
- Allowing the animal to “do their business” prior to entering the facility.

# Service Animals

## All health care staff should understand that:

- A person with a service animal should be welcomed into the facility as required by law.
- Service animals are allowed in any area in which the public are allowed.
- Service animals may be excluded from operating rooms, burn units, or any area where sterility may be compromised.

# Documentation

## Recommended documentation includes:

- Education provided to handler for infection prevention and visitation procedures.
- Vaccination status for the animal (must be current).
- Annual exam history.
- Temperament evaluation.

# Documentation

## Visit specific documentation should include:

- Handler and animal health status.
- Skin conditions or wounds.
- Bathing schedule (must be bathed within 24 hours before visit).

# Visit Recommendations

## Visit recommendations should be outlined to include:

- Ensuring that handlers prevent the animal from licking or coming in contact with open wound or devices.
- Placing a barrier, such as a cloth, towel, or sheet, between the animal and the patient's or resident's linens if the animal is allowed on a bed.
- Ensuring the animal's nails are short with no rough edges.

# Cleanliness

## Cleanliness policies should include:

- Procedures for if an animal has an accident.
- Bathing requirements for animals.
- Hand hygiene requirements for all patients, residents, and staff who interact with animals.



**Why Do We Care?**

# Other Considerations



# Not Just Infection Risks

- Allergies
- Phobias
- Animal-induced injuries

# Minimize Allergens

- Bathe the animal with allergen-reducing shampoo.
- Wipe the animal with a pet wipe prior to the visit.
- Have the animal wear a T-shirt, vest, or other protective clothing.

**Patients or residents with allergies should not visit with animals.**

# Consider Phobias

- Patients and residents must be asked if they would like to visit or interact with animals.
- Patients and residents with phobias should not visit with animals.



# Prevent Animal-Induced Injuries

- The animal should undergo temperament testing by a person or group who is experienced in assessing animal behavior.
- The program coordinator must obtain verification that the animals have had temperament evaluation.

# In Summary

- Facilities need animal visit policies and procedures.
- Animals and handlers must be free of communicable diseases.
- Clean and healthy animals are important.
- Documentation is essential.
- Hand hygiene and proper cleaning and disinfection are crucial.

# Resources

- APIC Text, Chapter 119: Animals in Healthcare Facilities, February 14, 2024 revision
- [Americans with Disabilities Act](#)
- [A Veterinary Perspective on the Recently Published Guidelines For Animal-Assisted Interventions In Health Care Facilities.](#)

**Questions?**

# Contact Information

**Nikki Mueller**



Nikki.Mueller@dhs.wisconsin.gov



608-628-4464

# HAI Prevention Program IPs

**Region 1:** Anna Marciniak; Phone: 608-590-2980

**Region 2:** Jennifer Kuhn; Phone: 608-772-4768

**Region 3:** Tess Hendricks; Phone: 608-338-9071

**Region 4:** Rebecca LeMay; Phone: 608-609-1918

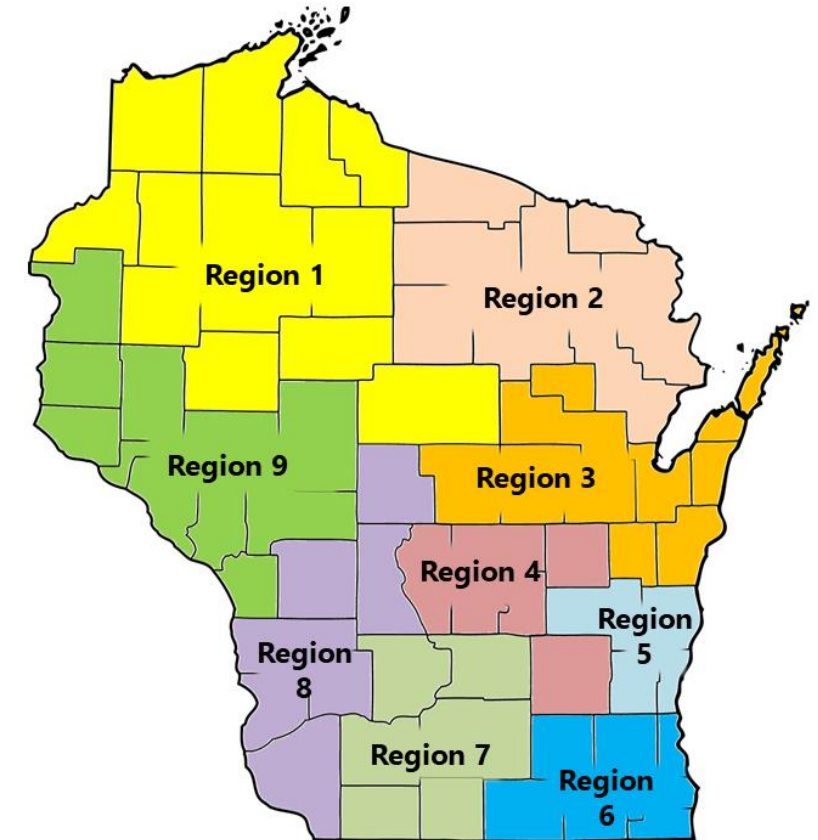
**Region 5:** Greta Starr; Phone: 608-867-4647

**Region 6:** Paula Pintar; Phone: 608-471-0499

**Region 7:** Beth Ellinger; Phone: 608-219-3483

**Region 8:** Ashley O'Keefe; Phone: 608-556-8608

**Region 9:** Nikki Mueller; Phone: 608-628-4464



# HAI Prevention Program Contacts



**Email:** [dhswhaipreventionprogram@dhs.wisconsin.gov](mailto:dhswhaipreventionprogram@dhs.wisconsin.gov)



**Phone:** 608-267-7711



**Website:** [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/hai/contacts.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/hai/contacts.htm)

# HAI Infection Prevention Education webpage



- HAI: Home
- For Health Professionals
- For Patients & Families
- Infection Prevention Education**
- Infection Preventionist Starter Kit
- Multidrug-Resistant Organisms
- Precautions
- HAI Data
- National Healthcare Safety Network
- Antimicrobial Stewardship



## HAI Infection Prevention Education

IPs play an essential role in facility infection prevention policy development, surveillance, and risk assessment. IPs also serve as a resource to other staff and programs within their facilities. The resources on this page are intended to connect health care facility infection preventionists (IP) with education materials to support their role in preventing, detecting, and responding to healthcare-associated infections (HAI).

### Webinars

#### HAI Education Series

The HAI Education Series provides educational presentations on topics including infection prevention, HAIs, antibiotic stewardship, disease surveillance, and outbreak response for health care staff in all setting types, local and Tribal health departments, and other health care partners. Each session features a new, timely topic presented by the Department of Health Services (DHS) program staff, HAI infection preventionists, partner organizations, or other external subject matter experts.

The HAI Education Series is a monthly webinar series, typically held the fourth Thursday of each month. Register for the [HAI Education Series](#).

HAI Education Series recordings +

# Upcoming HAI Education Session

There will not be an HAI Education Series session  
in July

Date: August 27, 2026

Topic: Environmental Services Playbook



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