

DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND HOSPITALS

ADMINISTRATIVE BULLETIN 3:06

DATE: January 31, 1983

SUBJECT: Hospital Pet Policy
Applicability: H

I. Introduction

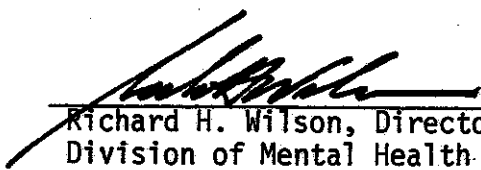
Recent efforts to normalize patient environments have resulted in the introduction of aquariums and bird cages to some wards of State psychiatric hospitals. In addition to fish and birds, consideration is also being given in some hospitals to allowing patients to adopt pets such as cats and dogs. The introduction of pets to hospital wards requires careful regulation to protect both patients and pets.

II. Policy

A hospital pet policy shall be developed incorporating the following points:

- A. A procedure to ensure that the treatment teams give consideration to the therapeutic value of caring for pets for each patient.
- B. A statement regarding the purpose for establishment of the program, including the anticipated benefits to the patients.
- C. The types and numbers of pets to be allowed and how responsibility is to be assigned for their care, feeding and safety.
- D. Limitation of pets to wards where they will not be detrimental to patients and where they will be safe. Generally, closed or security wards shall be free of all pets.
- E. Provision for dealing with questions relating to reproduction and the need for controlling the pet population.
- F. Procedures for dealing with diseased animals, e.g., through consultation with a licensed veterinarian. State funds may be set aside in an appropriate account for this purpose. Patients' fiscal resources should be considered first to cover such costs.

- G. Provision for enabling patients to assume responsibility for pets upon discharge, and a requirement that an examination of the circumstances of each case be made to ascertain whether a patient will be able to care for a specific animal.
- H. A statement prohibiting employees and visitors from bringing unwanted or stray animals onto the hospital grounds. Controls against such practices shall be established.
- I. A prohibition against cruel or improvised disposition of sick or unwanted animals.


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