

Visitors in the Home Policy

Division of Disability Services (DS)

Summary

DHS acknowledges the importance of connection to family, friends and community for people living with disability, their families and community.

The policy sets out the requirements for visitors in the home, ensuring client, worker and visitor safety, rights, and responsibilities.

Table 1: Document Details

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Policy Custodian	Julie Rogers Director, Quality and Clinical Services DHS Disability Services
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Table 2 – Revision Record

Date	Version	Revision description
January 2023	0.1	DRAFT
July 2024	1.0	Original Version
October 2024	2.0	Additional of section 7.9 'Animals' to provide detailed guidance of how visitors can seek approval to bring an animal/pet to a DHS Disability Services residence. Inclusion of Appendix 1 'Request to Bring an Animal to the Workplace Form'.

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1. Title

Visitors in the Home Policy

2. Purpose

The policy sets out the requirements for visitors in the home, ensuring client, worker and visitor safety, rights, and responsibilities.

3. Context

DHS acknowledges the importance of connection to family, friends and community for people living with disability, their families and community.

DHS is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for all its workers, ensuring the workplace is all inclusive, and free from harassment and victimization from people visiting the people we support.

4. Scope

The Visitors in the Home Policy applies to any person(s) defined as a visitor and/or worker entering a home.

DHS strives to celebrate and improve the lives of people of all ages, cultures, disabilities, ethnicities, faiths, gender identities, sex characteristics and sexual orientations. We are committed to making our services and workplaces safe and inclusive for all people and ensuring the full diversity of the communities we serve are represented in the strategies we lead.

5. Closing the Gap

This policy contributes to Closing the Gap by recognising the importance of connection to family, kinship, and community for Aboriginal people living with disability. It contributes to Priority Reform Three by committing staff and visitors to refrain from discrimination, harassment and bullying during visits to clients in the home. It also provides entitlements for visitors, workers, or clients to make complaints should they experience discrimination or feel unsafe.

6. Definitions

Table 3 – Definitions

Term	Meaning
Antisocial behaviour	Behaviour which involves activities that may disturb the peace, comfort, or privacy of people.
CARL	Child Abuse Report Line – telephone 13 14 78 to report / notify suspicion that a child or young person is, or may be, at risk of harm.
Child	A person under the age of 18-years of age.
Client	A person receiving services from DHS Disability Services.
Communal area	Kitchen, lounge room, laundry, front/backyard of a home where more than one person resides.
Community Visitor	Trained volunteer who provides advocacy and assistance to people, their carers and family members on behalf of the Community Visitor Scheme.
Consume	Smoking/vaping, drinking, eating, injecting a substance.
DHS	Department of Human Services.
Group home	House/accommodation where services and supports are provided to more than one person living with disability.
Home	Transition to Home (T2H) site, Aged Care Facility (Northgate), group home, premises, private property, SIL, SDA,
Premises	Any land, building, structure, vehicle that is considered a workplace.
Principal Community Visitor (PCV)	The lead member of the Community Visitor Scheme. The PCV reports to the Minister for Health and Wellbeing on matters relating to mental health services, and the Minister for Human Services on matters related to disability accommodation.
Private area	Bedroom(s), ensuite(s).
Private property	Item(s), land or building(s) that belong(s) to a particular person, group or company and is kept for their exclusive use.
Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA)	Specialist Disability Accommodation is a range of housing designed for people with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs.
Substance	Any gaseous, liquid, or solid substance and includes a plant or fungus declared as a poison within the Controlled Substances Act 1984.
Supported Independent Living (SIL)	Supported Independent Living is a model of support providing day to day assistance to a person with a disability to enable them to live as independently as possible.

Visitor	A person who does not live at the premises and is not attending to conduct work activities. Examples of visitors include family, kinship, friend(s), community member, religious leaders. DHS Disability Services employees attending outside of their rostered shifts or agreed work hours would be considered a visitor for the purpose of this policy.
Workplace	A place where work is carried out for a business or undertaking business and includes any place where a worker goes or is likely to be while working.
Worker	A worker is a person who carries out work in any capacity. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHS employee(s); or • Volunteer(s); or • A person of a prescribed class; or • Contractor(s) or subcontractor(s); or • Employee(s) of a contractor or subcontractor; or • Employee(s) of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the workplace.

7. Policy Detail

7.1 Client Rights and Responsibilities

Clients have the right to be visited in their home by family, kinship and friends at a time which is convenient for them.

Clients have the right to determine who may visit them and when they want to receive visitors, including the option to request no visitors.

Clients have the right to feel safe when people are visiting their home, whether they are being visited or another client is being visited.

Clients have the right to make a complaint about a visitor, whether they are being visited or another client is being visited.

7.2 Worker Rights and Responsibilities

Workers have a responsibility to maintain a safe workplace and not place themselves or others at risk.

Workers have the right to be treated fairly and with respect and feel safe and free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying in the workplace.

Workers have a responsibility to advocate for and respect client choice.

Workers who attend a DHS worksite outside of their agreed working hours or rostered shifts, will be classified as a visitor as per this policy.

7.3 Visitor Rights and Responsibilities

Visitors have a responsibility to treat others fairly and with respect when visiting a client's home.

Visitors have a responsibility to behave in a manner which is respectful towards all people and property.

Visitors have the right to be treated fairly, with respect and feel safe, free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

Visitors must follow all applicable published SA Health directives when visiting a home/site.

If feeling unwell, visitors should follow all SA Health recommendations and avoid visiting until any exclusion period has passed ([SA Health – Infectious Diseases](#))

Visitors can provide feedback, compliments and complaints via the Department of Human Services, Feedback and Complaints process.

7.4 Visiting Times

There are no set visiting times. All visitors are encouraged to plan ahead their visits, ensuring a successful visit and positive outcome for all, and at all times remain aware of others who share the home.

7.5 Visitor Numbers

There are no visitor number restrictions in place outside of other legislative requirements. Visitor number restrictions may be imposed for residential aged care services and high-risk settings due to COVID-19 or any other identified communicable disease outbreak precautions, and or other medical reasons.

7.6 DHS Managed Homes

Where houses/sites are managed by the Department of Human Services, workers have the right to ask visitors to leave the property due to antisocial behaviour.

7.7 Privately Owned Homes

Where the house/site is privately owned or managed, workers can advocate for the person they are supporting. At the request of the clients, workers can request visitors to leave the premises.

7.8 Children

Children must be accompanied and supervised by a responsible adult at all times.

Workers are not responsible for the safety and wellbeing of unaccompanied and unsupervised children. Workers are required to report any occasions where children are at a worksite and not supervised to their direct supervisor/manager.

Mandated reporters are required by law to report any suspected risk of harm to children via CARL.

7.9 Animals

Visitors intending to bring an animal to the residence must first seek written approval from DHS. To do this, the visitor or worker must complete section 1 of the 'Request to Bring an Animal to the Workplace Form' (see Appendix 1) and submit it to the relevant Team Leader/Site Manager for Assistant Director approval. The request must identify and consider any related risks and determine if they are adequately able to be managed, prior to the animal attending the site.

The Team Leader is responsible for undertaking a risk assessment based on information provided by the visitor or worker as per section 1 of the form. This risk assessment must be documented in section 2 of the 'Request to Bring an Animal to the Workplace Form'.

If a limited number of the clients or workers do not consent to the visit from the animal, or they are at risk (e.g. due to allergies), the worker may consider alternative arrangements (e.g. the animal visits outside only in an area away from other clients, staff may be rostered to a different shift). If alternative arrangements are not possible, the request to bring an animal to the residence will not be approved.

The Team Leader must provide the findings from the risk assessment to the relevant Assistant Director, who is responsible for approving whether the animal can attend the residence. The Assistant Director must record their decision and rationale for approval/denial in the 'Request to Bring an Animal to Work Form'.

This approval remains in place while the circumstances and information provided to inform the risk assessment remain the same.

In the event an incident occurs involving an animal during a visit, this will revoke approval until the matter is reviewed and expressly provided again in context of an updated risk assessment.

This does not apply to registered assistance animals.

During the Visit

The visitor / worker who is the owner of the animal is fully responsible for the animal including behaviour, engagement with other people, food, water and waste. The Team

Leader is responsible for communicating and engaging with the site on any visit and ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place to manage risks in line with the documented form.

7.10 Alcohol, Smoking/Vaping and Controlled Substances

The department acknowledges people's right to life choices such as consuming alcohol, cigarettes/vaping and controlled substances.

All visitors must follow the DHS Smoke Free Policy and South Australian Controlled Substances Act 1984 when on the premises.

7.11 Visitors and Antisocial Behaviour

Antisocial behaviour interferes with the reasonable peace, comfort and/or privacy of residents, workers, and neighbours. Examples of antisocial behaviour include:

- Obscene, racist, sexist, or demeaning language directed at workers or clients or their family, friends, and partners,
- Bullying, harassment, intimidation, and threatening behaviour directed at workers or clients or their family, friends, and partners,
- Assaulting or causing harm to themselves or another person,
- Noise that causes nuisance,
- Property damage, and
- Possessing, selling, distributing and/or consuming controlled substances as defined in the Controlled Substances Act 1984.

If required, relevant authorities (e.g., police) may be called to report and assist with managing antisocial behaviour and criminal charges may be laid.

In the instance where a visitor assaults a NDIS client, a report to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission will be made as required under the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*. In the instance where a visitor assaults an Aged Care client, a report to Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission via the Serious Incident Response Scheme will be made.

7.12 Access to the Site and Privacy

Visitors must notify workers when they arrive and leave the premises at a site with staff present at all times.

Visitors are only permitted to access communal areas of the home/site during a visit and must be respectful of people's personal belongings.

Visitors must have consent to enter private areas within the home. Visitors must not enter bedroom areas unless they have sought prior consent from the client and have

been welcomed into the space. If a visitor enters a bedroom without consent, they may be asked to leave the property.

Visitors are not permitted to remove items from the home/site without prior consent from client or staff as applicable based on who is the owner of the item.

Visitors are not permitted to enter office areas.

7.13 Planned Visits

Planned visits provide clients with the opportunity to prepare themselves and their home for the visit. Some clients may also want to prepare food for their visitors.

Where possible, notify workers of a proposed visit, providing them with the following information to ensure a positive outcome:

- Day/date of the visit,
- Time/duration of the visit,
- Number of visitors, and
- Purpose of visit if applicable (e.g., birthday).

By notifying workers in advance, they can ensure clients are best supported during the visit.

7.14 Unplanned Visits

We recognise that not all visits can be planned for in advance and sometimes 'popping in' will occur. In these instances, please be aware that the person you are visiting may not be home at the time of the visit.

Please also be aware that an unplanned visit may trigger a client to display behaviours of concern.

7.15 Community Visitor Scheme (CVS)

The South Australian Community Visitor Scheme (CVS) upholds the rights of people living with disability, making scheduled visits to sites/homes where support services are provided by DHS Disability Services.

CVS and DHS Disability Services will work together to schedule visits in accordance with the Disability Services, Community Visitor Scheme Regulations 2013 under the Disability Services Act 1993.

7.16 Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, visitors must take direction(s) from workers.

7.17 Incident Management and Reporting

Where an incident has occurred workers must follow departmental policies, procedures, guidelines including recording incidents, and reporting to relevant authorities or regulatory bodies.

8. Risk

The Visitors in the Home Policy addresses risk to workers, clients and visitors who may be exposed to antisocial behaviour.

Failure to provide a safe workplace for DHS employees, agency, contractors, and people providing direct support services may result in workplace injury and/or death.

Without the Visitors in the Home Policy, DHS may not adequately address the social and emotional wellbeing needs of clients, especially where those clients are at risk of social exclusion and isolation due to factors outside of their control.

9. Reference documents

9.1 Directive documents

National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013

Aged Care Act 1997

Disability Services Act 1993

NDIS Code of Conduct

Housing SA Antisocial Behaviour Policy

Housing SA Visitors, Other Occupants, and Overcrowding Policy

SafeWorkSA

Work Health and Safety Act 2012

Controlled Substances Act 1984

DHS Smoke Free Policy

DHS Respective Treatment at Work Policy

DHS Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy

9.2 Supporting documents

Client Incident Management Framework, Policy and Procedure

DHS Incident Management Unit Procedure

9.3 Related documents and resources

Community Visitor Scheme Visit and Inspection Procedure to DHS Disability Services Sites

Legal Services Commission – Noisy Neighbours



South Australian Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016

Strengths of Australian Aboriginal Cultural Practices in Family Life and Child Rearing

Request to Bring an Animal into the Workplace Form

10. Approval

Version 2.0

	 Julie Rogers Director, Quality and Clinical Services Disability Services 11/10/2024	 Joe Young Executive Director Disability 11/10/2024
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DHS Disability Services

Request to Bring an Animal to the Workplace Form

DHS acknowledges that pets and animals can be great support to clients.

However, animals in the workplace introduce a number of risks including: hygiene, allergies, pet behaviour or aggression, distraction, phobias or other aversions. DHS Disability Services has a responsibility to ensure a safe workplace.

All animals that visit a DHS premises (including Northgate, T2H and Disability Services) must have a request approved by the appropriate Assistant Director.

Pet Owner Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Pet Owner Contact Details: _____

Is the Pet Owner a visitor or worker: Visitor Worker

SECTION 1: To be completed by the Pet Owner

The following information will be used to determine whether DHS Disability Services can safely accommodate your pet in the workplace.

Please ensure that all information below is completed and submit this form to the appropriate Team Leader/Site Manager of the residence where the pet visit is intended to occur.

Please note, if your request is approved, you as the animal owner,

Are responsible for:

- *Ensuring the animal is safely transported and controlled, using a leash or carrier where appropriate whilst entering the building and during the visit.*
- *Ensuring the animal has a collar and ID tags where appropriate.*
- *Supervising the animal at all times during the visit.*
- *Ensuring the animal has the appropriate amenities such as a bed or mat, water, and toys, appropriate to the length of the visit.*
- *Informing workers and clients of the most appropriate way to interact with the pet.*
- *Ensuring the pet has regular breaks to relieve itself, stretch, etc.*
- *Promptly cleaning up after pets and disposing of their waste*

Acknowledge that:

- *Bringing an animal into the residence could pose a risk of harm to the animal*
- *If harm should occur to the animal because of the visit, you do not hold DHS Disability Services or their employees responsible*

Consideration	Comment
Proposed residence to be visited	
Proposed date and time of visit	
Duration of visit	
Reason for visit	
Type of animal	
Breed	
Size	
Age	
Health status	
Current vaccinations	
Behaviour / Temperament (please specify how the animal reacts to exposure to various people)	
Has there been any known incidents, including of aggression or violence?	
How will the animal be secured during the visit? (e.g. leash, carrier)	
Will the pet owner be available and capable of supervising the animal at all times during the visit?	
Are there any instructions for how workers and clients can interact with the animal? (e.g. no petting, approaching calmly, offering your hand, etc.)	

Is there any further information that is important for us to consider?	
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SECTION 2: To be completed by the Team Leader/Site Manager

The Team Leader is responsible for obtaining informed consent from all clients and workers of the residence or area where a pet visit is intended to be carried out.

The Team Leader must complete the below risk assessment to ensure that all risks are effectively considered, documented, and will be managed.

Consideration	Response	Details/Comments
Is the proposed date, time, and location of the visit suitable?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does the type, breed, size or age of the animal pose any risks to workers and clients?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Is the animal appropriately vaccinated and in good health?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Does the animal have a suitable temperament/behaviours for the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Can the animal be effectively controlled and supervised during the visit?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Is there a safe area available for the animal for the duration of the visit?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
If the animal owner is a staff member, will the animal visit impact their ability to perform their duties?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Has the owner of the property where the visit is to occur provided their agreement / approval for an animal visit?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Has informed consent been obtained from all clients at the residence?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Has informed consent been obtained from all workers of the relevant worksite?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Do any clients have any allergies, fears, or phobias relating to the visiting animal?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Do any workers have any allergies, fears, or phobias relating to the visiting animal?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

Are any special arrangements required to accommodate a visit? (e.g. certain staff not rostered on or to work from a different location?)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Are there any other risks that need to be considered?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
What strategies will be put in place to mitigate risks identified above?		

SECTION 3: To be completed by the Assistant Director

Consideration	Response	Comments
Relevant risks have been identified	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Risks can be effectively mitigated / eliminated	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Informed consent has been obtained from all clients/workers	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
The pet visit is approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Any other comments		
Name		
Signature		Date

Once approval has been provided, prior to the animal attending the residence, the Team Leader will:

- Establish and advise staff and clients of any guidelines for interaction with the pet (e.g. asking permission before petting, approaching calmly, offering your hand).
- Advise the animal owner that the animal must be supervised at all times and cleanliness must be maintained by promptly cleaning up after animal and providing necessary waste disposal supplies.