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**MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH BOARDS
COVID-19
Are Pet Daycare Centers Essential Services Pursuant to the
Governor's Order?
3.31.2020**

Public health professionals, especially local health departments and boards of health, are facing many questions from local public officials, residents, parents, health care providers, and others about COVID-19. MAHB's series of documents are meant to provide answers and guidance to health departments and boards of health. **This document is provided *for educational purposes only* and is not to be construed as legal advice. For legal advice, please contact your city or town attorney.**

QUESTION: Are pet daycare centers, which provide grooming, essential services pursuant to the Governor's Order Assuring Continued Operation of Essential Services in the Commonwealth, Closing Certain Workplaces, and Prohibiting Gatherings of More than 10 People (COVID-19 Order No. 13)?

ANSWER: Exhibit A to the COVID-19 Order No. 13 specifically designates “[o]rganizations and workers responsible for the care and custody of animals, pets and livestock” as essential services.¹ Pet daycare centers, boarding facilities, and kennels (hereinafter collectively referred to as “animal care facilities”), and their employees, are responsible for the “care and custody . . . of pets” and therefore are providing an essential service.

If the animal care facility includes grooming in its scope of services, would the animal care facility still be considered an establishment providing an essential service? While

¹ Exhibit A to COVID-19 Order No. 13 is available for download at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-essential-services>.

reasonable minds might differ, it is this author's opinion that the definition of "grooming," while not etched in stone, would include keeping an animal clean for its safety and the safety of the general public, especially in the case of an animal care facility that provides pet daycare. While in some instances grooming may include enhancing a dog's physical appearance for showing or other types of competition, in the normal animal daycare setting, this is an unlikely scenario.

For example, if at the pet daycare center there is one particular, regularly present dog that is in need of a bath because he played with a skunk, it is reasonable for the pet daycare center to bathe and groom the pet. If that same dog had played in a field that is frequented by deer, then it would be reasonable and necessary for the pet daycare center to perform tick checks and removal, which would include brushing the dog. These services assure that other pets present in the pet daycare center are protected from disease. Even if some grooming services are provided in addition to the daycare services, the hygienic care and cleaning of an animal can reasonably be considered essential.

Summary: Pet daycare centers, boarding facilities, and kennels are essential services and in keeping with the Governor's description of establishments responsible for the care and keeping of pets and animals. The bathing and grooming of the pet as part of the pet's care and custody are included in the normal operations of the pet daycare center.

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