

For Immediate Release – January 5, 2017

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Piedmont HealthCare Welcomes Patients with Disabilities

Raleigh, NC – Piedmont HealthCare, a growing, large multispecialty practice group, has resolved a case regarding access for individuals who use service animals. The terms of the agreement include Piedmont HealthCare disseminating to its physicians and medical offices a policy clarifying that service animals are generally permitted in Piedmont HealthCare facilities.

“We are committed to providing high quality healthcare to every member of our community, including individuals who have service animals,” said Jeffrey W. Smith, Piedmont HealthCare CEO. “We are pleased that we have been able to work with Disability Rights NC to align our values with updated policies that welcome individuals with service animals across our practices.”

The case arose in early 2015, when Disability Rights NC filed suit on behalf of Roger Wiker of Mooresville, an individual with limited vision who uses a guide dog. Mr. Wiker was told that his guide dog would have to stay behind while he received podiatry care. As an individual with a disability, Mr. Wiker has a federally-protected right to be accompanied by his guide dog in most areas of a doctor’s office or hospital. Mr. Wiker’s lawsuit alleged that separating him from his guide dog would violate his rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act.

“Piedmont HealthCare is taking the right steps down a path we hope other healthcare practices will follow, and we appreciate Piedmont HealthCare working with us to resolve this matter,” said Vicki Smith, Executive Director of Disability Rights NC. “Service animals provide invaluable assistance to people with disabilities. They allow the individual to maintain independence and generally should not be separated from their handlers.”

Disability Rights North Carolina is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Raleigh. Its team of attorneys, advocates, paralegals and support staff provide advocacy and legal services at no charge for North Carolinians with disabilities to protect their civil rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal and state laws.