



City of Vancouver
Service Animal Guidelines
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a service animal?

- No matter whether they are called “Service Animals”, “Assistance Animals”, or by another name, these are animals that have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) it is the training that distinguishes a service animal from other animals.
- Starting March 15, 2011, only dogs and miniature horses (subject to certain limitations) will be considered to be service animals under the ADA.
- Other animals, either wild or domestic, will then not qualify as a service animal.

Service animals are ‘working’ animals, not pets or therapy animals.

Q: What should I do if a person with a disability with a service animal comes to a City Of Vancouver facility?

A: First, welcome them. Second, offer them access to all public areas where other members of the public are allowed. Third, ask if they need any special assistance and do your best to provide it.

Q: Does the animal have to have any certification or documentation, or wear a vest or tag, to identify it as a service animal?

- No, there is no ADA requirement that the owner carry any certification papers showing that the animal is a service animal.
- Also, there is no ADA requirement that the animal have any special gear or identification.

Q: If the service animal doesn’t have to have a special tag, certification papers, or other identification, how can we determine if it is a legitimate service animal?

- There are two questions that may be asked:
 1. Is the animal required because of a disability?
 2. What task or service has this animal been trained to perform?
- One *cannot* ask: What *is* your disability? This is confidential information.
- Even if the service animal will not perform its task or service in the facility, it is entitled to enter.

Q: What is the difference between a Service Animal, a Guide Dog/Animal, a Therapy Animal and a Pet?

One common misunderstanding is the difference between Service Animals, Therapy Animals, Companion/Emotional Support Animals, "Social/therapy" Animals and pets. However, a Service Animal is the only category for which an accommodation to a facility's "no pet" policy must be made under the ADA.

- A Service Animal ...
 1. is individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability
 2. is not always a dog; miniature horses may assist people with disabilities
 3. may be any breed and size
 4. is trained either by an organization or by an individual with a disability
 5. is not necessarily certified or licensed
 6. does not always wear a harness, sign, or symbol indicating that they are service animals
 7. is not a pet
 8. is protected by Federal laws
 9. is trained to assist people with disabilities in many different ways, such as:
 - Guiding people who are blind or have low vision and retrieving dropped objects for them;
 - Alerting people who are deaf or hard of hearing to sounds and the presence of others;
 - Carrying and picking up items, opening doors, or flipping switches for people with disabilities who have limited use of hands or arms, limited use of their legs, or limited ability to bend or stoop;
 - Pulling wheelchairs;
 - Alerting people with disabilities to the onset of seizures, protecting them and cushioning them if they fall, reviving them, and performing other tasks that reduce the risk of seizure-related injury; and
 - Providing physical support and assisting people with physical disabilities with stability and balance.
- A Guide Dog/Animal ...
 1. is specifically trained to serve as a guide for a person with a sight impairment.
 2. is usually trained and certified by a licensed school for guide dogs.
 3. is specifically protected under state and federal laws.
- A Therapy Animal ...
 1. is not legally defined by federal law.
 2. may be defined by the laws of some states.
 3. provides people with contact to animals, but is not limited to working with people who have disabilities
 4. is usually the personal pet of their handlers (who may be therapists, physicians, rehabilitation professionals) and works with their handler to provide services to others, such as in nursing homes and hospitals.

5. has no federal law with provisions for people to be accompanied by therapy animals in places of public accommodation that have "no pets" policies.
 6. usually is not a service animal.
- A Companion or Emotional Support Animal...
 1. assists people with mental or emotional disabilities who use the assistance of this type of animal to function independently.
 2. has the most tenuous legal status, and as a concept it is hard, if not impossible, to differentiate them from the role of pet.
 3. is not legally defined, but is accepted as another term for "pet".
 - A Pet...
 1. is NOT a specifically trained to provide a service to a person with a disability.
 2. is NOT protected under the laws allowing equal access to people with disabilities.

Q: How do I know if a service animal is trained?

A: We can ask. Service animals can be trained by the individual, so we can't request any certification of that. We can ask whether they are service animals and we are allowed to ask what tasks they are trained to perform. Beyond that, there is no documentation or jacket/sign on the animal that is required by law. There is no limit on the number of trained service animals a person may bring in.

Q: Does the owner need to be with the service animal?

A: Yes. The animal must be with the person they are trained to assist. They don't necessarily have to be leashed to them, but must be with them to be able to assist. In some cases, a service animal may be with a person or organization whose responsibility it is to train the animal to be a service animal. In those cases, the 'owner' may not have a disability.

Q: What if a service animal barks or growls at other people, or otherwise acts out of control?

A: You may exclude any animal, including a service animal, from your facility when that animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. For example, any service animal that displays vicious behavior towards other guests or customers may be excluded. You may not make assumptions, however, about how a particular animal is likely to behave based on your past experience with other animals. Each situation must be considered individually.

Although the City may exclude any service animal that is out of control, it should give the individual with a disability who uses the service animal the option of continuing to enjoy its goods and services without having the service animal on the premises.

Q: What are some examples of out-of-control animal behavior?

A: If the animal presents any direct threat such as lunging or barking, you can ask them to remove the animal. Putting paws on the counter in itself is not a direct threat, but jumping on the counter or growling could be.

The person has to be in control of the animal, so, for instance, being able to get the animal down from the counter (or not) could be a reason to ask them to remove it from the building.

If a dog misbehaves you can ask the trainer to take it out of the facility, but you must let the trainer/owner know they can return without the dog. You aren't banning the person at that time, just the animal.

In some cases, an animal may be asked to remain with the owner due to limited space and seating such as in performance halls. The City is not required to provide a seat for the animal.

Again, you may reference the City of Vancouver's 'Guidelines for Owners of Service Animals'.

Q: What if other facility users have allergies or are afraid of animals?

A: Another person's allergies or fear of animals is not a valid reason for denying access or refusing service to people with service animals.

Q: How do I know if the animal's behavior is "reasonable" in one program vs. another (for example, a performance in the Luepke Center vs. a hike starting at the Marshall Community Center)?

A. The nature of programs and services may vary in different City of Vancouver facilities and for different activities. For information about bringing a service animal to any City of Vancouver facility or program, please contact the appropriate division:

City of Vancouver, ADA Coordinator, 360-487-8446

City of Vancouver, Parks and Recreation, Inclusion Services, 360-487-7060

City of Vancouver, Vancouver-Clark Parks and Recreation Department,

- Marshall Community Center – 360-487-7100
- Firstenburg Community Center – 360-487-7001
- Luepke Center – 360-487-7050
- Vancouver Tennis Center – 360-696-8123

Legal Reference

The City is required to comply with the following related legislation:

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Title II, Section 12132

28 CFR 35.130

Washington Administrative Code 162-26-130

RCW 49.60.215

WAC 162-26-060, 162-26-070, 162-26-135

RCW 49.60.120(3) and 1997 c 271. 98-08-035, § 162-26-130

RCW 49.60.120(3). 82-19-086 (Order 41), § 162-26-130

RCW 49.60.120(3). 99-15-025, § 162-26-135, RCW 49.60.040

For more information regarding State or Federal law that regulate service animals, you can visit www.ada.gov

Useful Websites

American Dog Trainers Network: www.inch.com/~dogs/service.html

American Kennel Club: www.akc.org

Assistance Dog United Campaign (ADUC): www.assistancedogunitedcampaign.org

Assistance Dogs International Inc. (ADI): www.adionline.org

Delta Society: www.deltasociety.org

International Association of Assistance Dog Partners (IAADP): www.iaadp.org

International Society of Canine Cosmetologists: www.petstylist.com

Power Paws Assistance Dogs: www.azpowerpaws.org

Psychiatric Service Dog Society (PSDS): www.psychdog.org

The Land of Pure Gold Foundation: www.landofpuregold.com

U.S. Department of Justice: www.ada.gov

DBTAC Northwest ADA Information Center: www.dbtacnorthwest.org

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