

SERVICE ANIMALS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy:

The facility welcomes service animals of employees, visitors and/or residents. A service animal is an animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability and is not considered a pet.

General Considerations/Definitions:

Health-care facilities are covered by the ADA or the Rehabilitation Act. A person with a disability may be accompanied by a service animal within the facility unless the animal's presence or behavior creates a fundamental alteration in the nature of a facility's services in a particular area or a direct threat to other persons in a particular area.

"Direct threat" is defined as a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be mitigated or eliminated by modifying policies, practices, or procedures.

"Service Animal" - a dog (or under certain circumstances, a miniature horse) that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. Some State and local laws also define service animal more broadly than the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does. Information about such laws can be obtained from the relevant State attorney general's office.

Facilities generally must allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of the facility where a similarly situated individual is allowed to go.

"Emotional Support/Therapy/Comfort/Companion Animal" is a domesticated pet that does not have special training in helping an individual cope with a disability. The animal is utilized by humans for companionship and comfort.

Dogs whose sole function is to provide *comfort or emotional support* do not qualify as service animals under the ADA and are not given the same access and privileges as a service animal in the facility.

No infection-control measures regarding the use of barrier precautions could be reasonably imposed on the service animal.

Guidelines:

1. When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions:
 - a. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and
 - b. what work or task has the dog been trained to perform.
2. Staff cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/>

This policy and procedure is not intended to replace the informed judgment of individual physicians, nurses or other clinicians nor is it intended as a statement of prevailing community standards or minimum standards of practice. It is a suggested method and technique for achieving optimal health care, not a minimum standard below which residents necessarily would be placed at risk.

3. Staff are not required to provide care for or supervision of a service animal. Care of the service animal, which includes providing food and taking the animal outside for exercise and elimination, remains the obligation of the person with the disability, not the health-care staff.
4. Service dogs must be registered and vaccinated in accordance with state and local law where the facility is located.
5. Staff are to practice hand hygiene after any animal contact.
 - a. Wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly soiled.
 - b. Use either soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub if hands are not visibly soiled.
6. A person with a disability may be accompanied by a service animal in all areas of the facility where a similarly situated individual would be permitted to go unless the animal's presence or behavior creates a fundamental alteration in the nature of a facility's services in a particular area or a direct threat to other persons in a particular area. For example, a staff member must be allowed to be accompanied by a service animal while in resident rooms if entering resident rooms is necessary to perform that staff member's job duties.
 - a. The determination that a service animal poses a direct threat in any particular healthcare setting must be based on an individualized assessment of the service animal, the patient, and the health-care situation.
 - b. Exclusion of an animal must be based on the actual behavior of the particular animal, not on speculation about how the animal might behave.
7. **A service animal must be under the control of its handler. Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless the individual's disability prevents using these devices or these devices interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of tasks.** In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
8. Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for the facility to deny access or refuse service to residents using service animals. Staff members who are allergic to dogs will be provided a reasonable accommodation to enable that individual to continue to work at the facility.
9. The person with a disability will not be asked to remove their service animal from the premises unless the dog's presence or behavior creates a fundamental alteration in the nature of a facility's services and/or the handler does not take effective action to control it or the dog is not housebroken.
 - a. Gloves will be used for clean-up of animal urine or feces from environmental surfaces.
 - b. Absorbent materials used in the cleaning process will be placed in leak-resistant plastic bags and discarded.
 - c. Clean-up of spills of animal urine, feces, or other body substances can be accomplished with blood/body substance procedures
10. The facility will not exclude a service animal because staff is able to perform the same services as the animal (e.g. retrieving dropped items, guiding the resident to the bathroom, etc.) or deems that the animal is "not needed" in the facility setting.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/>

This policy and procedure is not intended to replace the informed judgment of individual physicians, nurses or other clinicians nor is it intended as a statement of prevailing community standards or minimum standards of practice. It is a suggested method and technique for achieving optimal health care, not a minimum standard below which residents necessarily would be placed at risk.

11. The service animal will not be used in place of a credentialed healthcare provider who directly provides therapy for some forms of care, such as ambulation with a physical therapist after a total hip or knee replacement. However, a service animal will not be restricted from being in the presence of their handler/owner while they receive therapy services.
12. Discharge planning will incorporate the resident's future use of the service animal.
13. If the handler/resident is unable or unwilling to ensure that the service animal receives proper care, the facility staff and the resident will discuss possible alternatives, which may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Family members or friends taking the animal out of the facility several times a day for exercise and elimination.
 - b. The animal staying with family members or friends while the resident is at the facility.
 - c. Off-site boarding for the animal while the resident is at the facility.

References:

Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee. Updated July 2019. <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/pdf/guidelines/environmental-guidelines-P.pdf>

Understanding How to Accommodate Service Animals in Healthcare Facilities
<https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/abc/Pages/service-animals.aspx>

ADA.gov U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. Updated February 28, 2020. **ADA Requirements: Service Animals.** <https://www.ada.gov/resources/service-animals-2010-requirements/>

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/>

This policy and procedure is not intended to replace the informed judgment of individual physicians, nurses or other clinicians nor is it intended as a statement of prevailing community standards or minimum standards of practice. It is a suggested method and technique for achieving optimal health care, not a minimum standard below which residents necessarily would be placed at risk.