



A Primer on Service & Support Animals

The Dos and Don'ts of Compliance



What Is a Service Animal?

- Any animal that is *individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.*
- A person might also require the service of more than one animal for his or her disability.
- Service animals can provide a variety of services for people with apparent or invisible disabilities such as alerting to sounds, or oncoming seizures, assisting with balance and movement or guiding people with visual disabilities.

What Is an Emotional Support / Assistance Animal?

- Support animals are animals that primarily provide assistance for people with psychological disabilities such as depression or anxiety.
- Support animals ***are NOT specifically trained to perform disability related tasks.***
- Their mere presence allows people with psychological disabilities to function independently.

ADA Service Animal Definition

The 1992 Regulations

- Any animal regardless of species, size or breed as long as it is trained to perform a disability service.
- Animal must be under owner's control at all times, including simple voice control.
- Animal can enter health or food establishments as long as it is not disruptive or pose a safety risk or hazard.
- Emotional support or therapy animals were specifically excluded.

The 2010 Regulations

- ONLY dogs or (sometimes, where possible) , miniature horses that are trained to perform a disability service.
- Animal must be under owner's control at all times specifically with the use of a leash or other carrier.
- Dogs that have been trained specifically to mitigate or interact self injurious behaviors for people with psychiatric disabilities are included in this definition.
- Emotional support animals **ARE NOT** included.

Relationship to Other Laws



- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
- CA Unruh Act.
- Fair Housing Amendments Act (FHAA).
- Air Carriers Access Act.

The 2010 ADA updated regulations DO NOT supersede the protections provided by the above laws!

Documentation Requirements



- Documentation requirements vary based on the situation. For example, under the FHAA or the ACA A medical documentation is required. However, in terms of access to private or public entities:
 1. Inquiries into a person's disability status and need for service/support animal are prohibited.
 2. Service and support animals do not need any special identifying gear such as tags or harnesses. However, Animal Care & Control will issue a tag for a service or support dog with medical verification.
 3. Service and support animal owners are not required to carry any paperwork certifying the animal as a service or support animal.

What Is our Position in SF?

- There is enough evidence in federal and California state law to argue that allowing access to people with disabilities who rely on service OR emotional support animals to live independently, is a fundamental disability rights issue.
- Therefore, we are working on introducing a City ordinance that allows access to service and support animals in public spaces as long as they behave appropriately and do not pose a safety risk or health hazard.
- The legislation will focus mostly on acceptable animal behaviors, and effective means of control while in public.

Types Of Animal (& Owner) Behaviors to Expect:

- Animal must be always on a leash or small carrier, in very close proximity to its handler.
- Animal must be housebroken and cannot eliminate indoors.
- Animals must stay off furniture to avoid spreading allergens.
- Animals must behave appropriately and not be disruptive or aggressive.
- The animal's owner is solely responsible for the animal's care and behavior, while in public.

Causes for Removal from the Premises:

- Animal is out of control, i.e. no leash or excessively long leash that prevents proper control of the animal.
- While unprovoked, animal is aggressive, disruptive and engages in a threatening way with people or other animals.
- **Remember:** You may ask someone to remove an out-of-control animal, but you must always allow the individual to return and provide whatever necessary assistance to accommodate their needs.

We Are Here to Help!

Mayor's Office on Disability

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