



Trained service animals are able to provide independence and access for people with disabilities. Increasingly, service animals are visibly working in all public areas and questions may arise about their presence in educational settings. This guide is intended to provide answers to commonly asked questions about animals on campus. If you have further questions or concerns, please contact your campus ADA coordinator or Student Success on the main campus. Contact information for each campus is included on the back of this sheet.

Q: What is a “Service Animal,” according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)?

A: Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, patrolling the perimeter of a space to calm a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or calming their handler during an anxiety attack. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to complete must be directly related to the person's disability. Only dogs, and in rare cases, miniature horses, are considered service animals under the ADA. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA (DOJ, 2011). Legal standards view service animals much in the same way as a wheelchair or cane, as a tool used by people with disa-

bilities to gain greater access. People who use service animals are not required to notify the University that they plan to bring a service dog to class.

Q: Where is a service animal allowed to go?

A: A service animal, as defined above, is allowed to accompany its handler anywhere that is open to the public. Restaurants and dining halls are required to allow service animals to enter. Service animals are also welcome at any event or activity that is open to the public. On main campus, this includes, but is not limited to: residence halls, classrooms, dining facilities, athletic facilities and outdoor areas. On extended campuses, this would include all locations where any other student is allowed. On campus locations on military bases, please refer to the base policy. However, service animals may be excluded from environments where their presence would be unsafe. Please contact your campus ADA coordinator if you believe you need to exclude a service animal.

Q: How will I know that an animal is truly a service animal and not a pet?

A: If you encounter an animal on campus and are not sure if it is a service animal, there are some steps you can take. If the animal's task is obvious, such as leading a person who has a visual impairment, no questions need to be asked. However, an individual with a service animal can legally be asked two questions if the animal's task is not readily apparent:

1. Is this dog a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

Please do not ask about the individual's diagnosis or specific disability, or ask them to provide medical documentation of the need for the animal. These are specifically forbidden under the law.

The answer to the second question can vary widely as the uses for service animals are increasing every day. In order to



meet the ADA definition, the animal must be trained to perform some sort of task or work. There is no standard certification or training process for service animals and handlers are not legally required to provide any proof of training or identification for the dog. However, if the answer to the second question involves only providing emotional support or comfort, the animal does not qualify as a service animal under the ADA. Animals that are used only to provide comfort as part of the treatment for a disability are considered “emotional support animals” and fall under a different set of requirements. If you have questions about an animal in your class, please contact your campus ADA coordinator for assistance.

Q: What is an “emotional support animal”?

A: An emotional support animal (ESA) is a companion animal that is used to treat and support individuals who have been diagnosed with psychiatric disabilities. These animals can be prescribed by a counselor, psychiatrist or other professional as part of a treatment plan. ESAs do not enjoy the same access to facilities and places of public access that service animals do, and are not covered by the ADA. They are not allowed to be in class without additional permission. People who use ESAs must provide documentation of a disabling condition and the need for the ESA as part of their treatment plan and their use is covered under the Fair Housing Act. This only applies to housing, not academic or public buildings. An ESA may be approved to be in class however, but only after completing the accommodation request process with your campus ADA coordinator. If an ESA has been approved to be in your class, you will be notified by the ADA coordinator. If a student arrives in class with an animal that you believe may not meet the definition of a service animal, refer that student to your ADA coordinator and follow up with an email to the student and the ADA coordinator to make sure they get connected.

Q: What if a service animal is disrupting my class or event?

A: All service animals must be fully under the control of the handler at all times. This may include the use of a leash, harness or tether if the dog’s work is not impeded by the leash. If not using a leash, the handler must remain in control of the dog by other means, typically voice commands. A service animal can be removed from an event, classroom or other location if the dog is not under the control of the handler and the handler does not take control of it, or if the dog is not housebroken. If a service animal is disruptive and has to be removed from a class or event, please notify your campus ADA coordinator immediately. The handler must be allowed to continue participating without the animal and must be provided with any assistance they need to do so – such as a guide for a student who has a visual impairment or assistance pushing a wheel chair.

Q: I teach a lab that uses substances that could be dangerous for the service animal or to others if the animal disturbed them. What are my options?

A: A service animal can be removed from a location if the animal’s presence creates a hazard. If a lab environment would be dangerous for the animal or if the animal would compromise the environment needed for the lab, please contact your campus ADA coordinator. The animal’s handler must be allowed to participate fully and may require additional support to do so without their animal. Your campus ADA coordinator will assist with this.

Q: What if I or one of my students is afraid of or allergic to the service animal?

A: These are not considered acceptable reasons to deny the use of a service animal. Please contact your campus ADA coordinator for further support and we will work to address any concerns. Simple solutions such as seating changes may be helpful.

Q: What is the polite way to interact with a service animal?

A: When a dog is working, do not pet or attempt to interact with it. Doing so might distract it from the work it is performing. Always ask the handler before interacting with the dog. Similarly, do not offer food without permission. Don’t ask the handler to demonstrate what the dog is trained to do. If the dog is off leash, always ask before intervening. Some dogs work off leash as part of their training.

Extended Campus ADA Coordinators

Each campus has an designated ADA coordinator to assist with any disability related concerns on your campus. This person works with Student Success on the main campus to ensure that students with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations and that faculty and staff are supported in the provision of these accommodations.

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