

Service Animal Policy

The library recognizes that service animals assist people with disabilities to deal with the effects of their disabilities. Under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) animals are defined only as dogs (and miniature horses in some situations). Service animals may be any breed, size or weight. Service animals are not required to have special licenses, to be certified, or to have any visible identification. Service animals are allowed in the library building.

NOTE: Animals whose sole function is “the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship” are not considered service animals under the ADA and are not allowed in the library building or any library function.

Need for Verification

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), organizations that serve the public, like the Public Library, must allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into all areas of the facility where customers are normally allowed to go.

The ADA provides greater protection for individuals with disabilities and so it takes priority over local and state laws and regulations.

Library employees may only ask:

1. Is your animal a service or assistance animal required because of a disability?
2. What tasks has your animal been trained to perform?

Based upon the answers to these questions library staff will make a determination as to the status of the animal as a pet or legitimate service animal.

Employees cannot require documentation such as special ID cards or proof of certification for the animal or ask about the specific nature of a person's disability, e.g. "Are you blind?" or "Are you under a physician's care for this?"

People with disabilities who use service animals will not be isolated from other patrons or employees or treated less favorably than other patrons or employees.

Remember, the library will not require someone to provide details about his or her disability.

Rules for Service Animals

The library

- will not place limitations on the size, weight, and breed of service animals
- will require service animals to meet reasonable behavior rules
- will require service animals to be vaccinated

Animal Care and Supervision

The patron has the responsibility to care for and supervise the service animal. The patron should retain full control of the animal at all times. This means that while the animal is in the library, it must be on leash or in a carrier. When around other people or animals, the service animal should be well behaved (no jumping, snarling, nipping, excessive barking, growling). The patron is responsible for the safe removal of animal waste products.

Removal of a Service Animal

If a service animal is unruly, disruptive (aggressively jumping, growling, nipping, etc.) or not house trained, library staff may ask the patron remove the animal. If the animal's inappropriate behavior happens repeatedly, the librarian may request that the patron not bring the animal into common areas of the library until steps have been taken to mitigate the behavior (such as refresher training), or may require that the animal be removed from the library altogether.

Patron Interactions and Reactions to Service Animals

A fear of or minor allergy to dogs or other animals is not a disability, so the library does not need to "accommodate" in those situations. In rare cases, a person's allergy may be so severe that animal contact may cause respiratory distress. In those situations, the allergic person may also request an accommodation, such as keeping the animal and the allergic person separate, as much as is possible.

Sensitivity and Awareness

Staff should:

- Allow a service animal to accompany the patron at all times and everywhere in the library except where animals are prohibited for safety reasons,
- Do not separate or attempt to separate a resident from the service animal,
- Do not pet or talk to a service animal when it is working – this distracts the animal from its tasks.
- Do not feed a service animal, which may have specific dietary requirements. Unusual food or food at an unexpected time may cause the animal to become ill.
- Do not deliberately startle a service animal or make noises at the animal (barking, whistling, etc.).
- Be aware that many people with disabilities do not care to share personal details.

In instances where patrons complain that they are not allowed pets and want to know why an exception was made, staff should state that the library complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Any complaints should be forwarded to the director.