

Coles County Council on Aging

Service Animal Protocol

Purpose:

To provide guidelines for allowing persons with disabilities to utilize service animals when accessing services in Coles County Council on Aging(CCCoA) facilities and/or on CCCoA program vehicles. Provide clarification to maintain compliance with ADA guidelines.

Guidelines:

A. Definition:

1. Service Animal: Animals that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. These animals serve their human partners in a variety of ways, including but not limited to retrieving, pulling, alerting to sounds and or/seizures, minimal protection, opening/closing doors, etc. A service animal is afforded access to all places the public is invited when accompanying their human partner. (Miniature horses have been trained and recognized as service animals by the ADA however this policy specifically does not apply to miniature horses, as it is not reasonable to permit miniature horses within CCCoA facilities or on program vehicles.)
2. Emotional Support/Comfort Animals-animals used as part of a medical treatment plan as "therapy animals. "**(NOT CONSIDERED SERVICE ANIMALS under the ADA)** These animals provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias but **do not** have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities.

B. Service animals will be allowed in CCCoA facilities and/or program vehicles to accompany clients and visitors, as appropriate. The service animal will be restricted from entering the LifeSpan Center Great Room or kitchen, as their presence may compromise food handling safety and public health guidelines.

C. When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions: *(1) is the service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the animal been trained to perform.*

These questions should not be asked if the animal's service tasks are obvious.

If the answer to (1) is no or the client refuses to disclose information regarding (2) then the service animal will be denied access to CCCoA facility and/or program vehicle.

Staff may not ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training document for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

D. A service animal may be prohibited from the CCCoA facilities and/or program vehicles if: A) the service animal is out of control and the animal's owner does not take effective action to control it (i.e.: incessant barking, jumping on people, aggressive behavior) B) if the service animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

E. Allergies and fear are **NOT** valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to persons using service animals.

F. In the event an owner is asked to remove their service animal for one of the above reasons, the owner will be given the option to obtain services without having the animal present.

G. No birds, dogs, cats, turtles, non-human primate, rodent or other animals (except as named above) shall be allowed in CCCoA facilities and/or program vehicles.

H. A service animal is not considered a "pet" because it is specially trained to help a person overcome the limitations caused by his or her disability.

Client Responsibilities:

A. The service animal will be free of actual or potential communicable diseases. If the service animal demonstrates observable signs of illness, CCCoA may:

1. Request, at the owner's expense, a veterinarian certificate of health.
2. If the owner refuses to provide a health certificate for the service animal, the service animal can be removed from the health care facility.

B. Service animals must be "house broken" (toilet trained). They must also be harnessed, leashed or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal or other effective controls.

C. Service animals entering CCCoA facilities and/or program vehicles to assist persons with a disability must have responsible handlers assigned for:

1. Feeding
2. Toileting
3. General care/monitoring of behavior of the service animal

D. The owner is responsible for securing a responsible handler if they are unable to assume the duties. At no time are CCCoA employees, acting in a professional capacity allowed to provide care for the service animal. This includes but is not limited feeding, toileting, exercising and interacting.