

370 Service Animals

1.0 Background

The Washington Law Against Discrimination (WLAD) broadly defines “service animal” as an animal that is trained for the purpose of assisting or accommodating a person’s sensory, mental or physical disability (WAC 162-26-040).

If an animal meets this broad definition, it is considered a service animal. It does not have to be licensed or certified by a state or local government or a training program. This policy differentiates “service animals” from “pets,” describes types of service animals, provides guidelines for staff and tenants for the acceptance of service animals, and sets behavioral guidelines for service animals.

2.0 Definition of Service Animal: Any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. A companion animal with good temperament and disposition, and who has reliable, predictable behavior, may assist a person with a disability as a therapy tool. The animal may be incorporated as an integral part of a treatment process. Service animals are usually dogs, but may be any animal designated by the person and his or her treatment provider.

Service animals are not considered to be pets. A person with a disability uses a service animal as an auxiliary aid similar to the use of a cane, crutches or wheelchair.

Examples include:

- *Guide Animal:* An animal, trained to serve as a travel tool by a person who is legally blind.
- *A hearing animal,* trained to alert a person with significant hearing loss or who is deaf when a sound occurs, such as a knock on the door.
- *Service Animal:* An animal, trained to assist a person who has a mobility or health disability. Duties may include carrying, fetching, opening doors, ringing doorbells, activating elevator buttons, steadying a person while walking, helping a person up after a fall, emotional support, etc. Service animals sometimes are called assistance animals.
- *Seizure Response Animal:* An animal, trained to assist a person with a seizure disorder. The animal’s service depends on the person’s needs. The animal may go for help, or may stand guard over the person during a seizure. Some animals have learned to predict a seizure and warn the person.
- *A Companion Animal or Emotional Support Animal:* An animal that assists persons with psychological disabilities. Emotional support animals can help alleviate symptoms such as depression, anxiety, stress and difficulties regarding social interactions, allowing tenants to live independently and fully use and enjoy their living environment.

3.0 Guidelines for Staff regarding Service Animals

1. You **may not ask** questions about the person's disability. You may ask if he/she needs any accommodations with their disability.
2. You **may not ask** to be shown certification or a special ID card as proof of the animal's training.
3. You may not ask a guest with a service animal to use a specific entrance, exit or area of the business, although public identification is not required, most dogs wear some form of visible identification to represent them as Assistance Dogs. You may see equipment such as a tag, vest, coat, harness, or backpack. Dogs can be mixed or purebred and of any size.
4. The service animal must be permitted to accompany the individual with a disability to all areas of the facility where customers are normally allowed to go except where animals are specifically prohibited due to safety and health concerns.
5. An individual with a service animal may not be segregated from other customers

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6. You may not charge a fee for the service animal.

4.0 Staff Training and Service Animals Rules and Guidelines:

The District Executive Director or his/her designee will ensure that staff is properly trained in the facility's service animal policies, including the following rules:

1. Allow a service animal to accompany the person/handler at all times and everywhere on District property except where animals are specifically prohibited.
2. Do not pet or touch a service animal. Petting a service animal when the animal is working distracts the animal from the task at hand.
3. Do not feed a service animal. The service animal may have specific dietary requirements. Unusual food or food at an unexpected time may cause the animal to become ill.
4. Do not deliberately startle a service animal. Do not separate or attempt to separate a person/handler from her or his service animal. Avoid making noises at the animal (barking, whistling, etc.)
5. Avoid initiating conversation about the service animal, the person's disabilities or other service animals one has known. If you are curious you may ask if the person/ handler would like to discuss it, but be aware that many persons with disabilities do not care to share personal details.
6. Remember, not all disabilities are visible. The nature of the person's disability is a private matter, and you are not entitled to inquire for details.
7. If other people complain about the fact that they are not allowed to have a pet and want to know why you have made an exception, simply state that the District complies with the Federal ADA and Washington Law Against Discrimination.
8. Service animals do not need to wear any special identifying gear such as tags, harnesses or capes.
9. A person may train his or her own service animal and is not required to provide any information about training or the specific tasks the animal performs.
10. The animal must be supervised and the service animal handler must retain full control of the animal at all times.
11. Never allow the service animal to defecate on District property. If it happens it is the responsibility of the owner to clean it up.

5.0 Removal of a Service Animal:

When a service animal is unruly or disruptive (jumping on people, biting, or other harmful behavior), a District Supervisor or Head Guard may ask a person to remove the animal from the area. If the improper behavior happens repeatedly, the Supervisor may tell the person not to bring the animal into any area of District property until significant steps have been taken to mitigate the behavior. Mitigation can include refresher training for both the animal and the user.

6.0 Areas off Limits to Service Animals:

The District has designated certain areas off limits to service animals due to health and safety of patrons and the service animal, such as:

1. Service animals are not allowed in the water of the swimming pools.
2. Service animals are not allowed inside the sauna area
3. Any other areas where a significant health or safety hazard may exist.

These areas of restriction do not infringe upon the right of a person with disabilities to fully enjoy the amenities of the community and accommodations can be made to ensure.