



Service Animal Information and Etiquette

Definitions and Distinctions

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. The task must be directly related to their disability. 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, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets, and they are allowed everywhere on campus. Service dog handlers often have their dog wear a vest or some other identifier.

Service animals are distinguished from **Emotional Support Animals (ESA)** which are companion animals that provide comfort/therapeutic benefit to an individual with a mental health disability. There are a variety of breed of animal that may fit the category of an ESA, including a dog. ESAs are only allowed in our residence halls, within the room of the owner, and not in other parts of the college, under the Fair Housing Act (FHA). Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

An animal (usually a dog or cat) who accompanied their handler to provide therapy to others in settings such a schools, hospital and nursing homes is known as a **therapy animal**.

Service Animal Handler Responsibilities

It is important to know that the handler must be in full control of the service dog at all times. Unless preventing them from the task they are to perform, service dogs must be leashed, harnessed or tethered. In these cases, the dog is controlled through voice, signal or other effective controls. A handler who does not control the animal resulting in significant disruption to the educational or living environment may be required to remove the animal. The college has a “one bite” policy where the animal is to be removed from campus if the dog injures or acts aggressively or toward another person. The student may be subject to Student Conduct for failure to follow the policies for a service dog.

The student, not the college, is responsible for the actions of the service dog including bodily injury or property damage. Students with service dogs are likely to be charged if additional cleaning or damage occurs as a result of having the service dog on campus. The student is expected to pay these costs.

How to Be Around a Service Animal

A service animal and handler are a team. The dog is a “working” partner, whose primary function is to see to the needs of its human and listen for command or direction. When you see a service dog, it is most likely “on duty” indicated usually by the vest it wears to identify it as an “on duty” service dog. Service animals do have “off duty” time, but a napping dog is not necessarily off duty.

To respect this working duo, please be aware of the following:

1. Speak to the owner/handler rather than the dog. Distracting the dog may have life threatening consequences for a partner.
2. Treat a person accompanied by a service dog with respect and sensitivity. Asking personal questions about disability is out of bounds/an intrusion of privacy.
3. Some handlers are happy to answer questions about the dog, but respect their privacy if they don't want to talk.
4. Understand if a handler doesn't want to talk; you never know how many stares, questions, points, or pass-by-pettings they have dealt with that day. Treat a person with a service dog like you would treat a wheelchair user; you wouldn't touch a wheelchair or secretly take pictures of it, would you?
5. If you have questions about the legitimacy of an animal on campus, please contact Campus Security, 414-382-6158.
6. Don't offer food to the dog – the ultimate distraction!
7. If you think a handler and service dog could use help, ask first.
8. Most service dogs are trained to stay in work mode until they receive a release command from their handler. That's why many service dogs are able to ignore outside influences. If a service dog does approach you, sniff or nudge you, resist the urge to respond to the dog. Politely inform the handler. They must have control of the dog at all times and will correct the dog.
9. Handlers are aware that they are responsible for immediately clean up and proper disposal dog waste. Handlers who are physically unable to accomplish this task are responsible for arranging for it to be done.