

Staff Q&A-Service Animals Only in Facilities

The goal is to implement a phased-in approach to educating both staff and public on this new process. Consultation with user groups, staff, and other stakeholders will take place beginning in the Fall of 2015. Here are some Q&A to help with the implementation.

Q: What is a service animal?

A: A service animal is any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal officially trained to provide assistance to an individual with a visible or non-visible disability. If they meet this definition, these animals are considered service animals regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a local or provincial government body.

Q: Are there different types of service animals?

A: Yes. Service animals are trained to assist or perform some of the functions and tasks that an individual with a disability cannot perform for themselves.

Seeing-eye dogs are one type of a service animal, used by some individuals who are blind or have low vision. This is the type of service animal with which most people are familiar. But there are other types of service animals that assist persons with other kinds of disabilities in their day-to-day activities that require the same type of recognition and right to entry to public places.

Some examples include:

- Hearing Ear Dogs alert the person with a hearing disability to sounds.
- Special Service Skills Dogs can assist pulling a wheelchair, carrying or picking up things or providing balance for a person with mobility difficulties.
- Other types of Special Skills Service Animals are trained to provide seizure response to a person with epilepsy when they have a seizure. Other Special Skills Service Animals offer assistance to young adults with Autism or provide emotional support for people with mental health issues.

Q: How can I tell that an animal is a service animal and not just a pet?

A: Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars, harnesses or coats. Some owners may offer proof of licenses or certification papers or their valid CRTASA Photo ID Card that provides details of legitimate ownership and proof of official service animal status as well as photo ID of themselves and their accompanying service animal. However, the nature of the disability is

never disclosed and should not be asked for as it is deemed confidential and private information.

It is also important to mention, that proof of certification of a service animal is not a condition to allow entry of a service animal accompanying a person with a disability.

Q: What must I do when an individual with a service animal comes to my business?

A: 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 and where no other laws restrict access to the general public. It is discrimination based on disability to deny an individual with a service animal entry to a public place of business or to segregate them from other customers.

Q: Do I have any legal responsibility or obligation for a service animal is in my place of business with their owner who has a disability?

A: No. The care or supervision of a service animal is the sole responsibility of their owner. You are not required to provide care or food or a special location for the service animal while they are on your premises. The only expectation is that you do not distract, touch, or offer treats to the animal that is on official duty to provide assistance to their owner with a disability.

Q: What if a service animal barks or growls at other people or otherwise acts out of control on my premises?

A: You may exclude any animal, including a service animal or service animal-in-training, from your facility when that animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. For example, any service animal or service animal-in-training that displays vicious behavior towards other guests or customers may be excluded. You may not make assumptions, however, about how a particular animal is likely to behave based on your past experience with other animals. Each situation must be considered individually without bias or stereotypes. Although a public accommodation may exclude any service animal that is out of control, it should give the individual with a disability who uses the service animal or service animal-in-training the option of continuing to enjoy its goods and services without having the service animal on the premises.

Tips on interacting with a customer who uses a service animal

- Remember that a service animal is not a pet. It is a working animal.
- Avoid touching or addressing service animals – they are working and have to pay attention at all times.

- Avoid making assumptions about the animal. Not all service animals wear special collars or harnesses. If you're not sure if the animal is a pet or a service animal, ask your customer.
- Remember your customer is responsible for the care and supervision of their service animal. You are not expected to provide care or food for the animal. However, you could provide water for the animal if your customer requests it.