

Model Service Animal Policy **For Hospitals**

Background: Service animals are animals that are individually trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Some of the common tasks performed by service animals are: guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs, fetching items, alerting people with autism to distracting, repetitive movements, and alerting and protecting people who have seizure disorders. An animal does not have to be licensed or certified as a service animal.

Most service animals are dogs, but other animals may also be service animals.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), hospitals and other healthcare facilities must allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into all areas of the hospital that are open to the public.

Policies Regarding Service Animals and their Partners/Handlers

Licenses: Service animals must be licensed in compliance with state and/or local laws.

Health of the service animal: Service animals must be in good health. If a service animal is ill, the animal's handler will be asked to leave.

Control: Service animals must be on a leash or in a harness at all times. Service animals must be under the full control of their partners/handlers at all times. The care and supervision of the service animal is the responsibility of the partner/handler.

Hygiene and Cleanliness: Service animal partners/handlers must clean up after the animal, unless they are unable to do so because of a disability. If a disability prevents the handler from cleaning up after the service animal, this information must be provided to the ADA Coordinator.

Service animals must be clean. Daily grooming and occasional baths should be utilized to keep animal odor to a minimum. Adequate flea prevention and control must be maintained.

Behavior: Service animals must not engage in unacceptable behavior. If an animal does engage in unacceptable behavior, the handler is expected to use proper training techniques to correct the behavior. If the behavior is not corrected, the handler may be asked to leave the facility.

Documentation Requirements:

There is no requirement for documentation to prove that the animal has had particular training or is a “certified” service animal. The animal is not required to wear a certain kind of harness with identification, although all service animals must be on a leash or a harness at all times.

Current license and rabies vaccination tags must be worn by service dogs.

Areas of Restricted Access for Service Animals:

Any area of the hospital that is not open to the public may be off limits to service animals.

Areas in which special precautions are required, such as wearing masks, gloves, and gowns may be off limits to service animals.

Therapy Animals and Companion Animals:

Many individuals with disabilities are comforted and emotionally supported by the presence of a therapy animal or a companion animal. Such animals are not service animals. Therapy animals and companion animals are not required to be allowed on the premises. This policy does not violate the ADA because the ADA does not apply to therapy animals or companion animals used for emotional support.

Rules for Staff and other Patients:

1. Remember that a service animal is a working animal.
2. Allow the service animal to accompany the handler at all times.
3. Do not pet the service animal. This will distract from its work.
4. Do not feed the service animal.
5. Do not deliberately startle the service animal.
6. Do not call the service animal or try to get the service animal's attention.
7. Do not attempt to separate a service animal from its handler.