

# Types of Service Animals

Service Dog/Animal is the catch-all term for any animal that is specially trained to help a physically or mentally disabled person. Because service animals provide a variety of services, they are not always the stereotypical guide size. There are various kinds of service animals, including:

- **Mobility Assist Dogs:** This kind of dog can help pull a person's wheelchair, or carry things in a backpack, pick-up things a person drops, open/close doors and may help the handler get dressed or undressed.
- **Walker Dog:** The animal assists the handler in walking, by balancing or acting as a counter balance. Does many of the tasks that the Mobility Assist Dog does.
- **Seizure Alert/Response Dog:** This type of dog is trained to respond to a person's seizures and either stay with the person, or go get help. Some dogs are trained to hit a button on a console to automatically dial 911. When the dog hears the voice over the speaker, the dog starts barking. The disabled person would have arranged that the system is dog activated.
- **Psychiatric Service Dog:** This type of animal helps a those with a mental disability that may need a dog to be able to go out in public (agoraphobic), or may be autistic and need the dog to keep them focused. These dogs are trained NEVER to leave their handler's side.
- **Sig Dog:** This type of dog is trained to assist a person with autism. The dog alerts the partner to distracting repetitive movements common among those with autism, allowing the person to stop the movement (e.g., hand flapping). A person with autism may have problems with sensory input and need the same support services that a dog might give to a person who is blind or deaf.
- **Combo Dog:** These animals assist people with multiple disabilities, through programs like Paws With A Cause. A guide/mobility assist dog is an example of such an animal.
- **Guide Dog:** These trained dogs help blind or visually impaired people. The dogs serves as eyes for their owner, navigating them through traffic, stairs and sidewalks, while avoiding all obstacles that could cause injury.
- **Hearing Dogs:** "Hearing" or "Signal" dogs are specially trained to assist deaf people. They alert their owner to sounds, usually by approaching their owner and then by going back to the source of the sound. These dogs have the same access privileges as guide dogs and are permitted in all public and private facilities.

# Identifying Service Animals

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a service animal is any guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. Most service animals wear special tags or vests or have other means of displaying to people that they are at work. Some common identifiers are:

- **Guide Dogs** working with blind or partially blind citizens generally wear a harness and escort their owner.
- **Hearing Dogs** working with a deaf or hearing impaired citizen are generally escorted on a blaze orange leash.
- **Mobility Assist Dogs** may be in a harness or riding in a backpack.
- **Dogs in Training** may be taken to a public place provided they are on a leash, wearing a harness or in an appropriately place, based on the training in progress.

*All service animals are not marked, and are not required to be.* If you are not certain that an animal is a service animal, you may ask the person who has the animal if it is a service animal required because of a disability. You may not insist on proof of state certification before permitting the service animal to

## Assistance Dogs for the Handicapped

For information regarding how to obtain an Assistance Dog, please contact the International Association of Assistance Dog Partners (IAADP), or Assistance Dogs International (ADI).

### The Assistance Dog Institute

P.O. Box 2334  
Rohnert Park, CA 94927  
Tele: (707) 585-0300 (Voice/TTY)  
[www.iaadp.org](http://www.iaadp.org) or [www.adionline.org](http://www.adionline.org)

If you have further questions about service animals or other requirements of the ADA, you may call the U.S. Department of Justice's toll-free ADA Information Line at 800-514-0301 (voice) or 800-514-0383 (TDD).



## INFORMATION ABOUT SERVICE ANIMALS & YOUR BUSINESS

STAFFORD  
*Virginia*

Department of  
Economic Development  
1300 Courthouse Road  
Stafford, VA 22554  
(540) 658-8681

# Commonly Asked Questions About Service Animals In Places of Business

## Q. What are the laws that apply to my business?

- A. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), privately owned businesses that serve the public, such as restaurants, hotels, retail stores, taxicabs, theaters, concert halls, and sports facilities, are prohibited from discriminating against individuals with disabilities. ***The ADA requires these businesses to allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals onto business premises in whatever areas customers are generally allowed.***

## Q. What is a service animal?

- A. The ADA defines a service animal as ***ANY guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability.*** If they meet this definition, animals are considered service animals under the ADA regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government.

## Q. How can I tell if an animal is really a service animal and not just a pet?

- A. ***Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars and harnesses. Some, but not all, are licensed or certified and have identification papers. If you are uncertain that an animal is a service animal, you may ask the person who has the animal if it is a service animal required because of a disability.*** However, an individual who is going to a restaurant or theater is not likely to be carrying documentation of his or her medical condition or disability. Therefore, such documentation generally may not be required as a condition for providing service to an individual accompanied by a service animal. ***You may not insist on proof of state certification before permitting the service animal to accompany the 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.*** An individual with a service animal may not be segregated from other customers.

## Q. I have always had a clearly posted "no pets" policy at my establishment. Do I still have to allow service animals in?

- A. ***Yes.*** A service animal is NOT a pet. The ADA requires you to modify your "no pets" policy to allow the use of a service animal by a person with a disability. This does not mean you must abandon your "no pets" policy altogether but simply that you must make an exception to your general rule for service animals.

## Q. My county health department has told me that ONLY a seeing eye dog has to be admitted. If I follow those regulations, am I violating the ADA?

- A. ***Yes,*** if you refuse to admit any other type of service animal on the basis of local health department regulations or other state or local laws. The ADA provides greater protection for individuals with disabilities and so it takes priority over the local or state laws or regulations.

## Q. Can I charge a maintenance or cleaning fee for customers who bring service animals into my business?

- A. ***No.*** Neither a deposit nor a surcharge may be imposed on an individual with a disability as a condition to allowing a service animal to accompany the individual with a disability, even if deposits are routinely required for pets. However, a public accommodation may charge its customers with disabilities if a service animal causes damage so long as it is the regular practice of the entity to charge non-disabled customers for the same types of damages.

## Q. Am I responsible for the animal while the person with a disability is in my business?

- A. ***No.*** The care or supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of his or her owner. You are not required to provide care or food or a special location for the animal.

## Q. What if a service animal barks or growls at other people, or otherwise acts out of control?

- A. ***You may exclude any animal, including a service animal, from your facility when that animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.*** For example, any service animal 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.

***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 the option of continuing to enjoy its goods and services without having the service animal on the premises.***

## Q. Can I exclude an animal that doesn't really seem dangerous but is disruptive to my business?

- A. ***There may be a few circumstances when a public accommodation is not required to accommodate a service animal - that is, when doing so would result in a fundamental alteration to the nature of the business.*** Generally, this is not likely to occur in restaurants, hotels, retail stores, theaters, concert halls, and sports facilities. But when it does, for example, when a dog barks during a movie, the animal can be excluded.