AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the handler’s disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigational tasks or otherwise avoiding obstacles in their path; guiding individuals who are blind or have low vision to destinations; providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks; alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds; providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting individuals during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens; retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone; providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities; and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. The crime deterrent effects of an animal’s presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition.

More info: ADA Information Line 1 (800) 514-0301 or www.servicedogcentral.org

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Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), businesses and organizations that serve the public must allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into all areas of the facility where customers are normally allowed to go. This federal law applies to all businesses open to the public, including restaurants, hotels, taxis and shuttles, grocery and department stores, hospitals and medical offices, theaters, health clubs, parks, and zoos.

Businesses may ask if an animal is a service animal or ask what tasks the animal has been trained to perform, but cannot require special ID cards for the animal or ask about the person’s disability.

People with disabilities who use service animals cannot be charged extra fees, isolated from other patrons, or treated less favorably than other patrons.

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A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises unless: (1) the animal is out of control and the animal’s owner does not take effective action to control it (for example, a dog that barks repeatedly during a movie) or (2) the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

Allergies and fear of animals are generally not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people with service animals.

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