

USAGE OF SERVICE ANIMALS

Definition: A “service animal” is defined as any dog that has been 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.

1. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the service animal must be a dog. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, do not qualify as service animals for the purposes of this definition¹.

2. The work or tasks of the animal must directly relate to the handler’s disability. This includes, but is not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair or fetching dropped items.

3. An “emotional support animal” is a pet and does not qualify as a “service animal”.

Guidelines for Usage: If it reasonably appears to the District that a dog meets the definition of a “service animal” as outlined above, the District shall permit use of the service animal subject to the following policies and procedures:

1. All requests for an individual with a disability to be accompanied by a service animal must be addressed in writing to the Superintendent or designee. Such request must identify the need for the service animal as it relates to the staff member or student’s disability and the work or task the service animal has been trained to perform.

2. The individual making the request shall also provide evidence that the animal’s immunizations are current as well as contact information for the animal’s veterinarian. Such individual shall be responsible for providing the District with annual proof of all standard vaccinations including, but not limited to, Distemper, Hepatitis, Leptospirosis, Paroinfluenza, Parvovirus, Coronavirus, Bordetella, and Rabies. All service animals must be treated for and kept free of fleas, ticks, mange, and ringworm. All service animals must also be groomed and kept clean. Documentation may be requested or required regarding certification, training, or licensing as a service animal.

3. Where possible, requests for use of service animals on District property must be made no less than three (3) weeks prior to the proposed commencement of service animal usage.

¹In certain cases, people with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations regarding specially trained miniature horses. The type, size and weight of the animal must be assessed as well as the feasibility of the facility to accommodate those features. Standard service animal requirements do apply.

4. Under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), the District is required to provide students with a free appropriate public education (FAPE). If the parent/guardian of a student with disabilities believes that a service animal is required for the student to receive FAPE, the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team should consider the request and make a determination on a case-by-case basis. If the service animal is necessary for that child to receive FAPE, the accommodation should be made. The District will take into consideration the health, safety, and disabilities of other students when making its determination. However, service animals will not be excluded on grounds of health or safety as a blanket policy.

5. Use of a service animal on District property may be subject to a plan to introduce the service animal to the school environment, any appropriate training for staff and students regarding interaction with the service animal, and other activities or conditions deemed reasonable and necessary by the District.

6. Service animals should wear proper identification and must have a harness, leash, or other form of restraint mechanism, unless either the handler is unable because of a disability to use a restraint mechanism or use of a restraint mechanism would interfere with the service animal’s safe, effective performance of work or tasks. In this case, the service animal must otherwise be under the handler’s control. In the case that the handler will not be with the service animal at school, identified staff must be trained at the expense of the disabled staff member or student to give commands to the service animal.

7. The District is not responsible for the care or supervision of the service animal. The District is not responsible for providing a staff member to walk the service animal or to take the service animal outside to eliminate. All owners/handlers are responsible for taking the service animal outside for elimination and for cleaning up after the service animal, including proper disposal of the animal’s waste while it is on District property.

Revocation of Service Animal: The District’s approval of the use of the service animal on District property is subject to periodic review, revision, or revocation by the District. A school administrator may ask an individual with a disability or his parents/guardians to remove a service animal from District property under the following circumstances:

1. The service animal is out of control and/or aggressive and the animal’s handler does not take effective action to control it;
2. The service animal is not housebroken;
3. The service animal’s presence is fundamentally altering the nature of the service, program, or activity; or
4. The service animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others that cannot be eliminated through reasonable accommodation.

If a service animal is excluded, the District must give the individual with the disability the opportunity to participate in the service, program, or activity without the service animal.

Liability: The staff member or parent/guardian of the student who uses the service animal is liable for any harm or injury caused by the service animal to other students, staff, visitors and/or property. Any costs incurred due to damage caused by the service animal will be the responsibility of the staff member or the parent/guardian of the student who uses the service animal on District property and/or at District functions.

Student Transportation Services: Service animals for students are permitted in District transportation vehicles as long as it has been determined through the student’s IEP that a service animal is a part of a transportation accommodation, the inclusion of a service animal is documented on the special transportation form, the parents/guardians of each student riding in the District transportation vehicle have been notified in writing of the inclusion of the service animal, and the service animal is under the control of the handler at all times, as discussed above.