

What is a service animal?

Under ADA, a service animal is defined as a dog or miniature horse that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The task(s) performed by the animal must be directly related to the person's disability.

Is an in-training service animal allowed in public places?

Yes, in-training service animals are afforded the same access as service animals. Texas law allows a trainer of a service animal accompanied by an animal for training purposes in public places and common transportation carriers.

Does a service animal have to register with Student Disability Services or the UTSA ADA Coordinator?

Registration is not required. Texas law requires public facilities to admit a person with a disability accompanied by a service animal for assistance. The University may not require documentation such as proof that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a condition for entry.

Does a service animal have to be on a leash?

It depends. Service animals must be under control which means harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless the device interferes with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using the device. In that case, the individual must maintain control through voice, signal, or other effective controls.

When can service animals be excluded or removed?

Service animals are allowed in public facilities. If a particular service animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it, or if it is not housebroken, that animal may be excluded or asked to be removed from the premises and the handler may be subject to discipline. Also, if admitting service animals would fundamentally alter the nature of the service or program or there is a legitimate safety requirement, service animals may be prohibited.

Service animals may be excluded from certain areas such as operating rooms where the animal's presence may compromise a sterile environment. In teaching labs where hazardous materials may harm a service animal, the TA or instructor should have an interactive conversation about the hazards with any student accompanied by a service animal.

If an animal is excluded, the individual with a disability is given the opportunity to participate in the service, program, or activity without having the service animal on the premises.

What can University personnel ask to determine if an animal is a service animal?

In situations where it is not obvious that the animal is a service animal, personnel may ask only two specific questions: (1) is the animal a service animal required because of a disability? and (2) what work or task has the animal been trained to perform? Personnel are not allowed to request any documentation for the service animal, require that the service animal demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the person's disability.

What is an Emotional Support Animal (ESA)?

The main purpose of an emotional support animal (ESA) is to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship to their owners. An ESA must be domesticated, and well-behaved. Their presence is generally limited to residential facilities.

Is an emotional support animal (ESA) considered a service animal?

No. An emotional support animal is not a service animal and not afforded access to all public places. ESAs are afforded protections under the Fair Housing Act (FHA) only. Requests to possess an ESA in a residential facilities must be approved by UTSA Housing and Residence Life. Students must register with Student Disability Services in order to obtain a letter of recommendation to Housing personnel.

How many service animals do we have on campus?

There is no way to know how many service animals are on campus since, by law, registration of service animals cannot be required.

Does the ADA require service animals to be professionally trained?

No. Service animals can be trained by their owner or by another handler. People with disabilities are not required to use a professional service animal training program.

Can I approach or pet a service animal?

It is best to ask the handler or trainer before you approach or pet any dog (or other service animal). It is against the law for a person to assault, harass, interfere with, kill, or injure in any way, a service animal. Actions as this may impede or interfere with, the animal's performance of its duties; or places a person with a disability who is using a service animal, or a trainer who is training a service animal, in danger of injury.

Is a service animal required to wear a service vest, patch or special harness identifying them as a service animal?

No. ADA and the State of Texas do not require service animals to wear a vest, ID tag, or specific harness.

Is a service animal required to have vaccinations?

Yes. Individuals with service animals are not exempt from local animal control or public health requirements.

Where can I go for additional resources?

Department of Justice FAQs at https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_ga.html

Office of the Texas Governor at
https://gov.texas.gov/organization/disabilities/assistance_animals