

DBTAC Northwest ADA Information Center and Delta Society present *FAQs About Service Dogs*

About Our Organizations

DBTAC Northwest provides technical assistance, information, and training regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act. Information is provided from the regional office in Washington and affiliates in Alaska, Idaho, and Oregon.

Specialists are available to answer specific questions pertaining to all titles of the ADA and access guidelines. Training staff offer presentations to businesses, organizations, schools, people with disabilities, and the general public.

Delta Society's mission is to improve human health through service and therapy animals. Delta Society is a non-profit organization that offers a variety of programs, including pet partners and the national service dog center.

Service Dog Manners

When you meet a person with a service dog, please remember that the dog is working. Don't do anything to interrupt the service dog while it is performing its tasks.

Etiquette for Interacting with People with Service Dogs

1. Speak to the person first. Do not aim distracting or rude noises at the dog.
2. Do not touch the service dog without asking for, and receiving, permission.
3. Do not offer food to the service dog.
4. Do not ask personal questions about the handler's disability, or otherwise intrude on his or her privacy.
5. Don't be offended if the handler does not wish to chat about the service dog.

For More Information

About service dogs:

The Delta Society's National Service Dog Center (NSDC) - See links on: www.deltasociety.org

DBTAC Northwest
ADA Information Center
800-949-4232
www.dbtacnorthwest.org

About the ADA:

US Department of Justice
ADA Information Line
800-514-0301 (voice)
800-514-0383 (TDD)
www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahoml.htm

DBTAC Northwest ADA
Information Center
800-949-4232
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Legislation Protecting People with Disabilities and Service Dogs

Federal Legislation: Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Air Carrier Access Act of 1986, Fair Housing Amendments of 1988, Rehabilitation Act of 1973

State Laws: Check with the Attorney General's Office in your State for applicable State laws and regulations.

If Federal and State laws conflict, generally the one that affords the greatest protection to the person with a disability takes precedence.

What is a service dog?

- It is a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.

What is a disability?

- It is any physical or mental condition that substantially limits a major life activity.
 - Activities such as walking, bathing, caring for oneself, and hearing are examples of major life activities.
- Some disabilities may not be visible such as deafness, epilepsy, and psychological conditions.

What can a service dog do for someone with a disability?

- Service dogs can be trained to perform a wide range of tasks depending on the needs of the particular person with a disability.
 - Dogs can be trained to guide people who are visually impaired. They can alert people who are hearing impaired to specific sounds.
 - Dogs can learn to retrieve dropped items, open doors, and assist the handler with balance.

Do special laws apply to service dogs?

- Yes, people with disabilities who have service dogs have civil rights protection under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

What kind of protection is guaranteed under the ADA?

- The ADA requires businesses and places of public accommodation to admit people with disabilities who have

service dogs to their premises.

- People with service dogs have access to nearly every place where the general public is welcomed.
 - For example, service dogs are permitted to ride in taxicabs, buses, and trains. They may enter restaurants, theaters, hotels, and public schools.
- There are some rare situations where access to people with service dogs can be denied. An example would be admission to a sterile surgical setting.

How can I identify if a dog is a service dog and not just a pet?

- The simple answer is to ask the handler, "Is this a service dog?"
- You may also ask what tasks the dog has been trained to do for the handler.
- A service dog can be any breed or size.

Does the dog have to wear a vest or tag to identify it as a service dog?

- No, there is no Federal requirement that the dog wear any special gear or identification.
- Also, there is no requirement that the handler carry any certification papers showing that the dog has been trained as a service dog.
- You may not ask the person about the nature or extent of his or her disability.

How do local health and safety laws apply to service dogs?

- Remember that service dogs are NOT pets. Therefore, local laws that restrict pets from restaurants, housing, and theaters, for example, are not

applicable to service dogs.

- A good rule of thumb is that the ADA is the law that governs matters related to access to public places and businesses for people with disabilities accompanied by their service dogs. But, handlers of service dogs must obey local leash and vaccine laws and must have their dogs under control at all times.

What if my employees don't like dogs or are afraid of them?

- If you operate a business open to the public you must still permit a person with a service dog to have access.
- Plan ahead so that employees who are not fearful of dogs handle interactions with customers and clients with service dogs.

What if the service dog barks, growls, or whines?

- First, find out what happened before taking action. Maybe someone stepped on the dog's tail causing it to yelp.
- Also, the dog may have barked in response to the handler's medical condition.
- Finally, if the service dog's behavior is disruptive or destructive you may ask the handler to remove it from the premises. The handler is responsible for any damage done by his or her service dog.

What if other customers complain about a service dog being present?

- Explain to your customers that the service dog is medically necessary and that Federal law permits people with service dogs to have access to public places.