Accommodating Service and Support Animals in Sacramento County Facilities

Individuals with disabilities who use service AND / OR support animals are allowed equal access to all Sacramento County sponsored programs, facilities, services, and activities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a **service animal** as a dog of any breed, or in some cases, a miniature horse, that is individually trained to work specifically for a person with a physical, sensory, psychiatric, or other disability. There is no legal requirement for service animals wear a vest or any other form of identification, nor is the handler required to provide any special documentation or certification. Service animals are allowed to go with their handlers everywhere the general public is allowed. They are generally very well socialized as part of their training. They are focused on performing the tasks they are trained to do and should not be petted or played with.

**Support animals** are animals of any species that are not trained to perform a specific task, but their presence provides assistance to people with psychological disabilities. They help by reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, and difficulties regarding social interactions. Although support animals don’t have the same legal status as service animals, some people may not be able to participate in County programs and services without their support animals.

All people with disabilities accompanied by a service or support animal are welcome at any building, program, or agency of the County of Sacramento and its contracted service providers, provided they meet the following requirements:

1. All animals must be on a short leash or harness, or in a carrier, unless the handler is unable to manage one due to their disability or limitation. In such instances, the animal must be under control by voice or hand signals.
2. Dogs must be current on vaccinations including a current rabies tag.
3. The service or support animal must be under control of the handler at all times AND maintain socially appropriate behavior.
4. The animal must not be aggressive or engage in behaviors that are disruptive to services. If this occurs, staff may consider asking the handler to remove the animal, but must still make every attempt to provide the service to the client/customer.
5. The animal may not be on furniture, may not be fed or watered indoors and must be house-trained.
6. Staff will direct or assist the handler to the designated service animal relief area if there is a need. The handler is responsible for picking up and disposing of the waste.

[Staff note – consider developing guidelines for addressing behavior concerns and removing animal?]

Additional resources: Consider posting Handler Responsibilities poster in your facility

**Service and Support Animals for Sacramento County Employees**

A service animal accompanying an employee to his or her job is viewed as a “reasonable accommodation” under Title I of the ADA, and the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA), which governs employment. An employee must make a Reasonable Accommodation request and engage in the interactive process.

The employee may also request as an accommodation a support animal that does not meet the ADA definition of “service animal”. For example, the employee could request that their emotional support animal, which does not meet the ADA definition of “service animal,” be allowed to come to work as an accommodation.

During the interactive process, information regarding the employee’s disability, and how the service or support animal’s presence will enable the employee to perform the essential duties of his or her job, will be evaluated.

In general, employers are expected to grant the accommodation request if: a) the employee’s disability and the service animal’s function are related; b) the service animal will improve the worker’s ability to perform their job; c) the animal has had sufficient training to not be a disruptive presence in the workplace; and d) the accommodation does not present an undue hardship.

Learn More:

[ADA 2010 Revised Requirements: Service Animals](https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm)

[Service Animal Laws: Comparison Chart (ca.gov)](https://www.dor.ca.gov/Content/DorIncludes/documents/DisabilityAccessServices/DFEH%20ADA%20Comparison%20regarding%20Service%20Animals%20Laws.pdf)

[CA Department of Rehabilitation](https://www.dor.ca.gov/Home/ServiceAnimals)