

Service Animals

336.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Service animals play an important role in helping to overcome the limitations often faced by people with disabilities. The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office recognizes this need and is committed to making reasonable modifications to its policies, practices and procedures in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to permit the use of service animals that are individually trained to assist a person with a disability.

336.2 SERVICE ANIMALS

The ADA defines a service animal as any dog or miniature horse 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. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the owner's disability (28 CFR 35.104).

336.2.1 STATE LAW

Any other animal that is individually trained or is being trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, the work or task of guiding a person with impaired vision, alerting a person with impaired hearing to intruders or sound, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or retrieving dropped items is a service animal in accordance with Wis. Stat. § 106.52(1)(fm).

336.2.2 USE OF SERVICE ANIMALS

Some service animals may be readily identifiable. However, many do not have a distinctive symbol, harness or collar. Service animals are not pets and may be trained by an individual or organization to assist people with disabilities.

The following examples are some of the ways service animals may be used to provide assistance:

- Guiding people who are blind or have low vision.
- Alerting people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Retrieving or picking up items, opening doors or flipping switches for people who have limited use of their hands, arms or legs.
- Pulling wheelchairs.
- Providing physical support and assisting with stability and balance.
- Doing work or performing tasks for persons with traumatic brain injury, intellectual disabilities or psychiatric disabilities, such as reminding a person with depression to take medication.
- Alerting a person with anxiety to the onset of panic attacks, providing tactile stimulation to calm a person with post-traumatic stress disorder, assisting people with schizophrenia to distinguish between hallucinations and reality, and helping people with traumatic brain injury to locate misplaced items or follow daily routines.

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336.3 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Service animals that are assisting individuals with disabilities are permitted in all public facilities and areas where the public is allowed. Agency members are expected to treat individuals with service animals with the same courtesy and respect that the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office affords to all members of the public (Wis. Stat. § 106.52(3)(am)).

If an animal exhibits vicious behavior, poses a direct threat to the health of others or unreasonably disrupts or interferes with normal business operations, a deputy may direct the owner to remove the animal from the premises. A barking dog alone is not a threat nor does a direct threat exist if the person takes prompt, effective action to control the animal. Each incident must be considered individually and past incidents alone are not cause for excluding a service animal. Removal of a service animal may not be used as a reason to refuse service to an individual with disabilities. Members of this agency are expected to provide all services as are reasonably available to an individual with the disability (Wis. Stat. § 106.52(3)(am)(3)).

If it is apparent or if a deputy is aware the animal is a service animal, the owner should not be asked any questions as to the status of the animal. If it is unclear whether an animal meets the definition of a service animal, the deputy may ask the individual only the following questions:

- Is the animal required because of a disability?
- What task or service has the animal been trained to perform?

If the individual explains that the animal is required because of a disability and has been trained to work or perform at least one task, the animal meets the definition of a service animal, and no further question as to the animal's status should be asked. The person should not be questioned about his/her disabilities nor should the person be asked to provide any license, certification or identification card for the service animal.

Service animals are not pets. Agency members should not interfere with the important work performed by a service animal by talking to, petting or otherwise initiating contact with a service animal.

When handling calls of a complaint regarding a service animal, members of this agency should remain neutral and should be prepared to explain the ADA requirements concerning service animals to the concerned parties. Businesses are required to allow service animals to accompany their owner into all areas that other customers or members of the public are allowed.

Absent a violation of law independent of the ADA, deputies should take no enforcement action beyond keeping the peace. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against as a result of their disability should be referred to the Milwaukee County Office for Persons with Disabilities, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, or the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's Equal Rights Division.