

Service Animals on Campus—RACC Guidelines

Purpose

The following information is provided to help define the role and place of animals at Reading Area Community College, especially in promoting the safety, dignity, and independence of persons with disabilities.

Scope

As established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its 2010 amendments, service animals shall not be excluded from university/college facilities or activities. The ADA defines service animals as:

“...dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties.” **Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability.**

Pennsylvania anti-discrimination statutes (P.L. 208, Act 72) guarantee a blind person the legal right to be accompanied by a guide dog in all accommodations which are made available for public use. The statutes further guarantee equal housing accommodation to guide dog users in both the rental and purchase of housing.

Dogs in training are not considered service animals. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA. This definition does not affect or limit the broader definition of “assistance animal” under the Fair Housing Act.

Definitions--Types of Service Dogs and Terms

Guide dog: A dog that is carefully trained to serve as a travel tool by individuals with severe visual impairments or who are blind.

Hearing dog: A dog that has been trained to alert a person with significant hearing loss or who is deaf to a sound (e.g. a knock on the door, a fire alarm, the phone ringing).

Service dog (assistance dog): A dog that has been trained to assist a person who has mobility or health impairment. The duties the dog may perform include: carrying, fetching, opening doors, ringing doorbells, activating elevator buttons, steadying a person while walking, assisting a person to get up after a fall, etc.

Sig dog: A dog trained to assist a person with autism. The dog alerts the partner to distracting repetitive movements common among those with autism, allowing the person to stop the movement. A person with autism may have deficits in sensory input and may need the same support services from a dog that one might provide for a person who is blind or deaf.

Seizure response dog: A dog trained to assist a person with a seizure disorder. The method in which the dog serves the person depends on the individual's needs. The dog may stand guard over the person during a seizure or the dog may go for help. Some dogs learn to predict a seizure and warn the person in advance.

Partner/handler: A person with a service animal. A person with a disability using a service animal is called a partner; a person without a disability is called a handler.

Service Animal: A dog individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability.

Team: A person with a disability, or partner and the service animal. The two work as a team in accomplishing the tasks of everyday living.

Therapy animal: A therapy animal may soothe anxiety in some individuals, but does not assist an individual with a disability in the activities of daily living. Therapy animals are not protected by laws for service animals under the ADA.

Policy and Procedures

Inquiries: When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform. **Staff cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.**

Control Requirements:

Service animals must be harnessed, leashed or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls. The partner must be in full control of the animal at all times. The animal must be as unobtrusive as possible.

Exclusion for behavior: A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises unless: (1) the dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it or (2) the dog is not housebroken. When there is a legitimate reason to ask that a service animal be removed, staff must offer the person with the disability the opportunity to obtain goods or services without the animal's presence.

Consequences for behavior: When a service animal is determined to be out of control, the infraction will be treated on an individual basis through the Disability Services Office. If the animal poses a threat to the safety of others, Security and, if necessary, local police will become a part of the collaborative team to determine the outcome of the behavior.

Exclusion – Allergies/Fear: Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service animals. When a person who is allergic to dog dander and a person who uses a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, for example, in a school classroom or at a homeless shelter, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room or different rooms in the facility.

Responsibilities for Individuals with Disabilities using Service Animals on Campus

Individuals with disabilities using service animals on campus are responsible for ensuring that the animal is properly treated by the handler and by others and behaves and responds appropriately at all times in public and the team must adhere to the same socially accepted standards as any individual in the university community.

Clean up rule: The partner must follow local ordinances in cleaning up after the animal defecates. Individuals who physically cannot clean up after their own service animal due to extenuating circumstances may not be required to personally pick up and dispose of feces; however partners are required to make other arrangements for the prompt disposal of waste.

Visitors with Service Animals

All visitors to campus with service animals must adhere to the same guidelines as members of the campus community.

Areas Off Limits To Service Animals

There are certain instances when it may be considered unsafe for the animals to be in such places as medical facilities, laboratories, mechanical rooms or any other place where the safety of the animal or its partner may be threatened. Each location's safety will be evaluated by a group of individuals including: the Disability Services Office, the laboratory director or professor, and other staff who can assess and manage risks on campus. When it is determined unsafe for the team to be in one of these areas, reasonable accommodations will be provided to assure the student equal access to the activity.

Emergency Situations

In the event of an emergency, the responding team should be trained to recognize service animals and to be aware that the animal may be trying to communicate the need for assistance. The animal may become disoriented from the smell of smoke in a fire or laboratory emergency, from sirens or wind noise, or from shaking and moving ground. The partner and/or animal may be confused in a stressful situation. The responding team should be aware that the animal is trying to protect and, in its confusion, is not to be considered harmful and every effort should be made to keep the animal with its partner.

Pets

Consistent with this policy, non-service animals (i.e., companion or therapy pets) are not permitted in classrooms, academic activities, faculty offices, administrative offices or any college building, except when the non-service animal is being used for academic demonstration or other college-related purposes.