

Service Animal Basics

They ARE: Dogs, any breed, any size, and trained to perform a task directly related to a person's disability.

They are NOT: Required to be certified or go through a professional training program, required to wear a vest or other ID that indicates they are a service dog, and emotional support or comfort dogs.

Task Examples: retrieve objects, remind them to take medications, lick owner's hand to alert of oncoming seizure, guide due to visual impairment, etc.



Service vs. Emotional Support

"If the dog's mere presence provides comfort, it is not a service animal under the ADA. But if the dog is trained to perform a task related to a person's disability, it is a service animal under the ADA. For example, if the dog has been trained to sense that an anxiety attack is about to happen and take a specific action to help avoid the attack or lessen its impact, the dog is a service animal." (ADA.gov)

RCW 49.60.214—Misrepresenting a service animal may come with a civil infraction and fine of \$500.

Service Animals & Visitation

A GUIDE TO SUCCESSFUL & SAFE VISITS



CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

Statewide Visit Manager

ADA Compliance Manager

600-BR009 (R. 9/2025)

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN:
PRISONS DIVISION & HEALTH SERVICES DIVISION



Confirmation

PERMITTED TO ASK:

1. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work, or task has the dog been trained to perform?



**Service animals are not required to wear vests and because a dog wears a vest doesn't mean it is a service animal.*

NOT PERMITTED:

1. Request documentation that the dog is registered, licensed, or certified as a service animal.
2. Require that the dog demonstrate its task.
3. Inquire about the nature of the person's disability.



Permission to Remove

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not overrule legitimate safety concerns. If the dogs act fundamentally alters the goods, services, programs, or activities of the agency, consideration for removal is reasonable.

Acts for consideration consist of, but are not limited to—not housebroken*, repeatedly barking*, lunging at other visitors and/or staff in an aggressive manner, jumping on other visitors and/or staff, running around the visiting room, etc.

**If the handler needs to take the dog out during the visit we cannot terminate the visit.*

**If the dog barks once or is being provoked that does not mean it is out of control.*

NOTE: The animal *must* be harnessed, leashed, or tethered when in public places *unless* the devices interfere with the service animals work or the person's disability prevents use of these devices. Otherwise, the handler must use voice, signal, or other effective means to maintain control of the dog.

Key Components

DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT

The dogs **behavior** is going to be the most important part to determining the impact to the visit and safety of all others. Consider when service animals arrive for visits and they act out:

1. How does the behavior disrupt the process?
2. How did it occur?
3. What point did it occur during the visit?
4. Any additional observations?
5. Was anyone injured?
6. Were the permitted questions asked and noted?
7. State facts—be objective.

DOC 450.300 G.1. Documentation of each visit, to include any positive or negative observations or issues addressed during the visit. What is your local process to ensure information is entered into the statewide system?

There is no provision that a dog may be permanently banned—must deal with the dog each time.

Documentation is key!