Service Dog 101

Do’s and Don’t of Service Dogs

Elizabeth Sandy and Neo
About Us

Elizabeth

- Undergraduate student at WSU Tri-cities
- Trained over 15 Dogs with local Service Dog Organization
- Diagnosed with PTSD in 2018 – Neo helps alert of/calm down during episodes.

Neo

- 1 year old German Shephard
- Training since 14 weeks old
- When off duty, likes chasing squirrels and long walks on the beach
What is a Service Dog?

“What any dog 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.”

Must be trained in a specific task to mitigate a disability:
• Diabetes: alert of low blood sugar
• Depression: reminder to take medication
• Epilepsy: Alert of seizure, keep handler safe during seizure
1990: American with Disabilities Act (ADA) passed to protect the rights of those with a disability, including those with Service dog.

The ADA permits service animals to accompany handlers wherever the general public is allowed.
Training a Service Dog

- Start with obedience training – Behavior Standard
- Some dogs are not suited to be service animals due to personality (overly submissive, aggressive etc.)
- Trained to perform specific task.
- Service Dogs in Training are NOT protected by the ADA in WA state.
Do’s and Don’ts of Service Animals: Two Volunteers!
How to Approach Someone with a Service Dog

**DO**

- Approach the handler, not the dog
- Keep pets/dogs away
- Give the handler/dog space
- Notify someone of an unattended service dog
- Advocate for handlers being mistreated
How to NOT Approach Someone with a Service Dog

DON’T

• Distract the dog in any way: petting, offering food, talking to dog: they have a job to do!
• Judge the handler!
Service Dog Myths vs. Facts

= True

= False
Emotional Support Animals, Therapy Animals and Service Animals are the same thing.
Emotional Support Animal: Provide comfort to a handler with emotional and mental health conditions. Require documentation, no public access, no behavior standards.

Service Animal: Trained to perform a specific task to mitigate the handlers disability, have full public access by law.

Therapy Animal: Go to schools, hospitals, treatment center etc. to comfort those OTHER than the handler. No public access.
Service Dogs must be certified/registered with the ADA.
There is no national registry for service animals. Those online are not legitimate. As long as a dog performs a specific task to mitigate a disability and is behaved in public, it is legally protected as a service dog.
Service Dogs are not required to wear a vest.
The ADA does not require service dogs to wear identification. However, many handlers choose to do so.
Service Dogs are allowed in food establishments, even where food is prepared.
Service Dogs are allowed anywhere the general public can go. This excludes environments where the presence of an animal would fundamentally alter the nature of the service/goods (Such as a sterile environment in a surgical unit). Religious institutions are also excluded.
Employees can legally ask about a person’s disability to determine if their dog is a service animal.
An entity’s employees can only ask 2 questions regarding a person’s service animal:
1) Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
2) What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

They can NEVER ask about the nature of a person’s disability.
Any Breed or Size of Dog can be a Service Animal.
The ADA does not discriminate based on a dog's size/breed.
How to Spot a Fake Service Dog

A service dog may be fake if:

- They’re being pushed/carried in a cart
- They’re not on a leash
- They seek attention
- They have “accidents”
- They’re aggressive

It is illegal to misrepresent a pet as a service animal in WA state. You can report fraudulent service animals to the local non-emergency police line, or to the ADA.
Questions?