



Category: Employee	REF.: EMP #56
Subject: Accessible Customer Service – Use of Service Animals by the General Public	Page: 1 of 5
Date: 07/Dec/2009	Supersedes: New
Human Resources Manager Signature:	Date:
CEO Signature:	Date:

SUBJECT: Accessible Customer Service – Use of Service Animals by the General Public

POLICY:

The Centre will welcome all members of the community to its facilities by committing its staff, volunteers and placement students to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of people with disabilities, such service to incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of service animals.

DEFINITIONS

Service Animal

A service animal is an animal that is being used because of a person's disability and this is either readily apparent or supported by a letter from a physician. A service animal must be a dog or other common domestic animal excluding animals such as rabbits, farm animals, ferrets, rodents, reptiles and other members of the wild animal kingdom. Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who have vision loss, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing or an animal who is training to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety. The customer service standards provisions also apply to animals providing other services to people with disabilities.

“Readily Apparent”

It is “readily apparent” that an animal is a service animal when it is obvious by its appearance or what it is doing. For example, it may be readily apparent that an animal is a service animal if it is wearing a harness, saddle bags, a sign that it is a service animal or has a certificate or identification card from a service animal training school or an identification card from the Attorney General of Ontario. It may also be readily apparent if a person is using the animal to assist him/her in doing things such as opening doors and retrieving items.

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PROCEDURE:

1. Responsibility

All staff, volunteers, placement students and others dealing with the public will be properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

2. Access to Premises

- a) Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a service animal will be welcomed on the premises with his/her service animal and will be accompanied by the service animal while on premises. Access will be in accordance with the normal security procedures.
- b) This requirement applies only to those areas of the premises where the public or third parties customarily have access and does not include the places or areas of the Centre where the public does not have access.
- c) This procedure deals solely with the individual's right to be accommodated by a service animal. Access to treatment areas for service animals used by clients and staff is covered under separate procedures.

3. Exclusion of a Service Animal

- a) The service animal can only be excluded from access to the premises where this is required by another law. Examples may include the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and the *Food Safety and Quality Act*. The former Act prohibits service animals in places where food is prepared, processed or handled, although service animals are permitted where food is served and sold.
- b) Where there is a risk to health and safety to another person as a result of the presence of a service animal, consideration must be given to options available prior to exclusion of the service animal. An example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the service animal. It is the Centre's expectation that the situation be fully analyzed and all measures to eliminate risk be considered (e.g. creating distance between the two individuals concerned, making reasonable alteration in schedules, etc.).
- c) A service animal can be excluded if it is a breed that is prohibited by law. An example would be the *Ontario Dog Owners' Liability Act* which place restrictions on put bull terriers.

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PROCEDURE (cont'd):

4. Alternative Measures of the Service Animal must be excluded
In the rare instance where a service animal must be excluded, the Centre must make every effort to put alternative arrangements in place to provide the services required by the person with a disability. This could involve leaving the animal in a secure area where it is permitted by law and discussing with the person how best to serve them (e.g. a person with a vision disability might need someone [a member of staff or volunteer] to guide them).

5. When it is necessary to confirm an animal is a Service Animal
 - a) Where an animal is not a trained guide dog and it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, a staff member may ask the person using the service animal for a letter from a physician confirming that the animal is needed because of a disability. The letter does not need to identify the disability, why the animal is needed or how it is used.
 - b) Where the person using the service animal regularly comes to the Centre, a manager may request to keep a copy of the letter on file but only as long as required by the circumstances. Alternatively, the person using the service animal may be asked to bring a letter with them on occasions when they visit the premises. The principal or departmental manager shall preserve the confidentiality of the letter and information contained in the letter and shall not use or disclose the letter or information except as provided for in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, cM56*, or otherwise required by law.

6. Requirements of Service Animals and their Partners/Handlers
 - a) **Training:** a service animal must be specifically trained to perform a service function. Evidence of successful completion of a recognized licensing or certification program for service animals, or a letter documenting training, is required. The manager shall preserve the confidentiality of the letter and information contained in the letter and shall not use or disclose the letter or information except as provided for in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, cM56*, or otherwise required by law.
 - b) **Identification:** The service animal must wear a harness, cape, identification tag or other gear that readily identifies its working status.

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PROCEDURE (cont'd):

- c) Control: the partner/handler must be in full control of the service animal at all times. The care and supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of its partner/handler.
 - d) Leash: The service animal must be on a leash at all times.
 - e) License and Tags: All service animals must have an owner identification tag. If the service animal is a dog, it must be licensed from an approved training program or have current license and tags from local authorities.
 - f) Health: The service animal must be in good health. The service animal must have current vaccinations and immunizations against diseases common to the type of animal. All service animals must wear a current rabies vaccination tag.
 - g) Clean-up Rule: The partner/handler must:
 - i) always carry equipment sufficient to clean up the animal's feces whenever the animal and partner/handler are off the partner's property
 - ii) never allow the animal to defecate on any property, public or private (except the partner's own property) unless the partner/handler immediately removes the waste
 - iii) be responsible for the proper disposal of the animal's feces and for any damage caused by the waste or its removal
7. Conditions for Keeping a Service Animal
- a) Disruption: The partner/handler of a service animal that is unruly or disruptive (e.g. barking, running around, nipping, bringing attention to itself) may be asked to remove the animal from the facility. If the improper behaviour happens repeatedly, the partner/handler may be required to take significant steps to mitigate the behaviour before bringing the animal into the Centre. Mitigation may include muzzling a barking animal, obtaining refresher training for both the animal and the partner or other appropriate measures.
 - b) Ill health: Service animals that are ill should not be taken into public areas. A partner/handler with an ill animal may be asked to leave the Centre.

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PROCEDURE (cont'd):

8. Procedures for Relating to Service Animals and Their Partner/Handler

In relating to service animals and their partner/handlers, staff should:

- a) Allow a service animal to accompany the partner/handler at all times and everywhere in the facility, except where service animals are specifically prohibited due to health, environmental or safety hazards (e.g. certain mechanical rooms, custodial closets, areas where protective clothing is necessary or areas where there is danger to the animal).
- b) Always speak to the partner/handler first but remember that they are not walking “show and tell” exhibits.
- c) Refrain from petting, feeding or deliberately startling the service animal. Resist the temptation to offer treats to the service animal.
- d) Immediately report any disruptive behaviour or a service animal to a staff member. No attempt should be made to separate a partner/handler from his/her service animal.

Framework

Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)

Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07

Ontario Human Rights Code

Cross-Referencing

The Accessible Customer Service – Use of Service Animals by the General Public EMP#56 aligns with the following Centre procedures:

Accessible Customer Service - Policy EMP #52

Accessible Customer Service – Use of a Support Person by the General Public EMP #53

Accessible Customer Service – Notification of Disruption of Service EMP #54

Accessible Customer Service – Use of Assistive Devices by the General Public EMP #55

Accessible Customer Service – Monitoring and Feedback on Accessible Customer Service EMP #57