Service Dogs

Service dogs help perform a function for a person that is limited by a disability. For Veterans and Wounded Warriors, they may serve as a vital link for the service member to continue a career of service.

Federal law defines service animal as "any dog 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. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability" (DOJ, n.d.).

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers have the right to request reasonable documentation that an accommodation is needed (EEOC, 2002). Businesses may also ask if the animal in question is indeed a service animal and what tasks it performs. Some questions or actions businesses are not permissible:

- require special identification for the dog
- ask about the person’s disability
- charge additional fees because of the dog
- refuse admittance, isolate, segregate, or treat this person less favorably

A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove their service animal from a business unless:

- the animal is out of control and the handler cannot or does not take effective action to control it.
- the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

References.