

## **DISABILITY RESOURCE AND ACCESS**

### **Procedure 0013**

#### **Guidelines for Service Animals**

**Updated September 15, 2010**

**Purpose:** The ADA defines a service animal as “any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability”. While legal rights are afforded to users of service animals, with it comes the responsibility of insuring that the animal behaves and that the team (partner and animal) *adhere to the same socially acceptable standards as an individual.*

**Definitions:** Service Animals are defined 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 this definition.” Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting and individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors.

Companion Animals or emotional support animals are permitted by the Fair Housing Act and the Air Carrier Access Act, but they were not and are still not protected by the ADA. The ADA does, however, allow for psychiatric service animals. The difference between psychiatric service animals and emotional support animals as viewed by the Department of Justice is in the work or tasks the animal performs. “Psychiatric service animals can be trained to perform a variety of tasks that assist individuals with disabilities to detect the onset of psychiatric episodes and ameliorate their effects. Tasks performed by psychiatric service animals may include reminding the handler to take medicine, providing safety checks or room searches for persons with PTSD, interrupting self mutilation, and removing disoriented individuals from dangerous situations.” The Department of Justice said that it decided to specifically prohibit emotional support animals to deter fraudulent or mistaken use of other animals not qualified as service animals under the ADA.

#### **Procedures:**

Documentation: The service animal must have current health and vaccination records, and must generally have undergone minimum training which may have been provided by the student owner. Public entities “shall not ask about the nature or extent of a person’s disability, but may make two inquiries to determine whether an animal qualifies as a service animal. A public entity may ask if the animal is; one, required because of a

disability and two, what work or task the animal has been trained to perform.” Public entities are also prohibited from requiring documentation that the animal has been certified, trained or licensed as a service animal.

Control Requirements: The student owner must keep the service animal on a leash and under control at all times. The service animal must be as unobtrusive as possible and may not display disruptive behavior or block aisles.

Exclusions: The one exception to the dogs-only rule is miniature horses. The DOJ said that when it originally ruled on Title II and III regulations, it did not anticipate the variety of animals that would become used as service animals, which range from pigs and miniature horses to snakes, iguanas and parrots. The DOJ believes that limiting the types of species recognized as service animals will provide greater predictability and add assurance of access for people with disabilities who use dogs as service animals.

Public Etiquette by Faculty, Staff, or other Students: Service animals are at work and are not pets. Do not pet the animal without the student owner’s permission. Do not feed the animal; try not to startle the animal; do not encourage the animal to play, or attempt to separate the animal from the student owner. Do not hesitate to ask the student with the service animal if you can assist the student in any way.