



Title: SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY	
Subject: GENERAL OPERATIONS	Page: 1 of 3
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Policy Number: 04.60.00
	Approval Date: 11/29/2016
	Last Revised Date: 06/13/2018

POLICY STATEMENT:

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (*ADA*) as of March 15, 2010, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (*the "District"*) allows service animals to access most public areas within its property. For additional information on service animals go the Department of Justice website www.ada.gov for a fact sheet on service animals.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to inform those who require the assistance of a service animal or individuals who have a family member/friend that requires a service dog that the District is a service animal friendly environment and is open to all.

AFFECTED AREAS:

This policy applies to all persons entering, visiting or using resources at any District location. The District reserves the right to change, modify or amend this policy at any time as it deems appropriate.

DEFINITIONS:

Service Animals: Service animals are working animals, not pets. Service animals are defined as dogs/or miniature horses that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. The work or task a dog or miniature horse has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability.

Examples of such work or tasks include but are not limited to:

- Guiding people who are blind;
- Alerting people who are deaf;
- Pulling a wheelchair;
- Alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure;
- Reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications;
- Calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (*PTSD*) during an anxiety attack; and, or
- Performing other duties.

Special Note: Miniature horse, with a general range in height of 24" to 34" and a weight between 70 lbs. and 100 lbs. are an alternate service animal to dogs. The horses are permitted if:

- The horse is house broken,
- The horse is under control of the owner,
- The facility can accommodate the horse's type, size and weight; and,
- Their presence does not compromise legitimate safety requirements for safe operations of the facility.

Emotional Support Animals/Comfort Animals: These animals are often used as part of a medical treatment plan as therapy animals, they are not considered service animals under the ADA. These support animals provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain

Title: SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY	Page 2 of 3	Policy Number: 04.60.00
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phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

PROCEDURE/PROCESS:

- 1) **Control Requirements:** A service animal shall have a harness, leash, or other tether, unless either the handler is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash or other tether, or the use of a harness, leash or tether would interfere with the service animal’s safe, effective performance of work tasks, in which case the service animal must be otherwise under the handler’s control (*e.g. voice controls, signals or other effective means*).

- 2) **Permission:** Under the ADA, service animals are permitted in most public areas on District property **UNLESS** one of two exceptions are met:
 - The animal is out of control and/or the animal’s handler does not take effective action to control it; or
 - The animal is not house-broken. Service animals are permitted in locker rooms, but not indoor shower facilities. (*For assistance in shower facilities, please alert District staff.*)

Service animals must be in their official roles and under control at all times.

If at any time, any of the provisions above are violated and/or the sight, sound or scent of a service animal upsets exhibit animals or natural area animals (*especially nesting sites*), causing them to become dangerous to themselves or others, District staff reserve the right to remove the service animal from the area.

Note: Emotional Support Animals/Comfort Animals are prohibited at District Nature Centers.

- 3) **Public Etiquette by District Employee:** District employees can ask two questions to determine if a dog or horse is a service animal:
 - Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
 - If yes, then what is the work or task the dog has been trained to perform?

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) All relevant District employees should be trained on this policy.

COMMUNICATION PLAN:

- 1) This policy should be distributed to all relevant staff.
- 2) This policy should be added to the District shared drive, intranet, and website.

REFERENCES:

Americans with Disabilities Act: Service Animals
https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_qa.html

Title: SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY	Page 3 of 3	Policy Number: 04.60.00
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Illinois Service Act

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=2271&ChapterID=64>

POLICY LEAD:

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APPROVAL:

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General Superintendent

POLICY HISTORY:

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Revised:

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions concerning District policies, please contact:

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