

SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY

For the safety and comfort of patients and SNO staff, only service animals are allowed in the clinic.

Definition of a service animal:

A service animal is a dog or other animal (in some cases miniature horses) that has been individually trained to perform disability-related tasks or do work for the benefit of a person with a disability. RCW 49.60.040 (24).

Neither the ADA nor Washington State law includes what some people call “emotional support animals”: animals that provide a sense of safety, companionship, and comfort to those with psychiatric or emotional disabilities or conditions. Under the ADA and Washington State law, owners of public accommodations are not required to allow emotional support animals, only service animals. These laws also don’t apply to pets.

ADA Service Animal Guidelines:

Under the ADA, State and local governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations that serve the public generally must allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities/special needs* in all areas of the facility where the public is normally allowed to go.

Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal’s work or the individual’s disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls. Service dogs in training are allowed in our office as well. The dog in training must wear a leash, collar, cape, harness, or backpack that identifies in writing that the dog is a service animal in training.

When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed.

Staff may ask two questions: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability/special need, and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform. Staff cannot ask about the person’s disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises unless: (1) the dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it or (2) the dog is not housebroken. When there is a legitimate reason to ask that a service animal be removed, staff must offer the person with the disability the opportunity to obtain goods or services without the animal’s presence.

Under the ADA, the staff is not required to provide care or food for a service animal.

Reference: https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

*Disability and special Needs as defined by RCW 49.60.218