

Service Dog Accommodation Checklist & Ownership

Similar to when a new employee joins a company, onboarding a service animal takes coordination and communication across several business departments. Here is a list of onboarding tasks each department should own:

HR

- Manage accommodation request with Employee
- Communicate to Employee's direct team members, people working in shared areas, and supervisors
- Outline proposed plan for managing employee or visitor questions and concerns. (general FAQ & Action plan – what if someone is allergic, afraid of dogs, etc.)
- Schedule an intake meeting with the Employee to go over the following:
 - Which entrance/exit is most commonly used by the Employee?
 - Which common areas are regularly accessed: gym, break room, café, meeting rooms, etc.
 - What should the security team be aware of – what does the worst case look like?
 - Will the employee travel to other office sites or vendor sites?
- Inform security team

FACILITIES

- Inform cafeteria workers
 - Develop best practices around open food services
- Inform cleaners/custodians
 - Arrange for extra cleaning in Employee's immediate working area, common areas, etc.
- Install HEPA filters or take other measures to minimize pet dander/allergens
- Post a sign in common area to alert employees and visitors
- Designate an accessible area as the service animal relief zone, post signage if needed.
 - See sign example on page 3

EMPLOYEE

- Ensure service dog is properly trained
- Ensure service dog is groomed regularly
- Ensure service dog is a "good corporate citizen"
 - i.e., well behaved: no barking, jumping, growling, etc.

8 Do's and Don'ts for Behavior Around A Service Dog

DO

Speak to the owner/handler rather than the dog

The service dog and her handler are a team. If you want to talk to them, always speak to the person first rather than automatically approaching the dog. Remember, the animal is working, and her human's life could depend on her staying focused on her job.

Keep your own dog a distance away from a working dog

If you happen to have your dog with you when you encounter a service dog, don't allow your pet to approach them without first talking with the handler to see if its permissible. Other animals are an obvious distraction to working dogs, and in a worst-case scenario, there could be an altercation between the two animals.

Do treat the owner/handler with sensitivity and respect

Asking a service dog's handler personal questions about his or her disability is out of bounds. It's disrespectful and an intrusion of privacy. Assume they can handle things themselves. If you sense they could use your help, ask first. And don't take it personally if your offer is rejected, as there's usually a good reason.

Inform the handler if a service dog approaches you

If a working dog approaches you, sniffs or nudges you, etc., politely let the handler know. Resist the urge to respond to the dog – the handler will correct the dog.

DON'T

Touch the dog without asking permission first

Touching or petting a working dog is a distraction and may prevent him from tending to his human partner. The dog may be in the process of completing a command or direction given by his human, and you don't want to interfere. Fortunately, most are trained to stay in work mode until they receive a release command from their handler. That's why many service dogs are able to ignore outside influences.

Offer a service dog food

According to Canine Companions for Independence, "Food is the ultimate distraction to the working dog and can jeopardize the working assistance dog team." Not only are food and treats a potential distraction, but many service dogs are fed a specific diet and often on a specific schedule.

Assume a napping service dog is off duty

All dogs nap, including work dogs. When her handler is sitting or standing for some length of time, it's perfectly natural and appropriate for a service dog to catch a few winks. She's still technically at work, however, so all do's and don'ts remain in effect.

Assume service dogs never get to 'just be dogs'

Working dogs typically get plenty of R&R and playtime. When they're home and out of their "work clothes" they're free to behave like any other dog. Since the jobs these wonder animals do are often challenging and stressful, their handler recognize they need plenty of downtime and exercise.

Service Dog Sign Posted at Boston Scientific

