

# Inpatient Psychiatric Service Dog Policy Template

This template is designed to be used as a guide in healthcare facilities for administrators to develop policies and protocols for admitting and accommodating patients who use Service Dogs which are trained in tasks or work to mitigate their patient's disability.



|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Title: | <b>Protocol For Accommodating Service Animals</b> |
|--------|---|

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Facility Name:    |  |
| Date:             |  |
| Handler's Name:   |  |
| Dog's Name/Breed: |  |

## I. Background

This facility is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which is a federal law that allows Service Animal teams access to places of public accommodation. Public accommodations include hospitals, care facilities, and medical treatment centers, among other places of business, education, and entertainment. As defined in the ADA, "Service Animals" are either miniature horses or dogs that are specifically trained to mitigate their handler's disability through tasks and/or work.

A few examples of tasks and work include:

- Pulling wheelchairs
- Retrieving dropped items
- Alerting to low or high blood sugar
- Alerting bystanders to medical alarms
- Deep pressure therapy
- Opening doors/drawers/cabinets
- Tactile stimulation
- Medication reminders
- Burrow under legs to raise blood pressure
- Bracing or counterbalancing (mobility assistance)
- Guiding a visually impaired partner
- Alerting to sounds

These are only a select few of the possible tasks or work a Service Animal can be trained to perform. For the purposes of our definition, if a dog performs specific, definable **trained** tasks for their handler with a diagnosed disability, then the dog is a Service Animal, regardless of whether or not the dog in question possesses any certifications, licenses or titles from a government agency or training organization.

*NOTE: Providing comfort and/or emotional support is not considered a task. “Helping me with my anxiety” is not a task, unless the dog performs a specific behavior, on cue, reliably, in response to anxiety.*

Per the ADA, Service Animals are allowed in our facility and may accompany their person throughout most of the facility. However, there are some exclusions, nearly all of which are sterile environments or dangerous for a dog.

This protocol outlines behavioral and training requirements and expectations for Service Animals seeking admission to our facility, lays out all safety requirements and procedures, specifically as they pertain to our inpatient psychiatric treatment programs, and defines the responsibilities of staff, patient, and dog.

## **II. Definitions**

- A. Disability – defined by the ADA as a “physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities”
- B. Partner – someone partnered with a Service Animal; the human half of a Service Animal team
- C. Service Animal – a dog who has received specialized training to perform specific, recognizable tasks in order to mitigate aspects of their partner’s disability; also, a trained miniature guide horse
- D. Team – Both the Service Animal and partner
- E. Therapy Dog/Comfort Dog/Emotional Support Animal – dogs who have not received specialized task training in order to mitigate a disability; dogs who only offer comfort or emotional support to their handlers – these dogs will not be recognized or admitted as Service Animals, as they do not have legal public access rights, whether or not they are owned by someone with a disability
- F. Cue – a verbal, physical, or environmental signal that the dog should perform a specific behavior in response to said cue. A behavior that is “on cue” is reliable, predictable, and definable.

## **III. Expectations**

- A. Staff
  - Will be trained in ADA requirements and expectations
  - Will not inquire as to the exact nature of a person’s disability, but may ask if a Service Animal is required because of a

disability, and type of tasks/work the animal performs for their partner, as is allowed by law

- Will allow the Service Animal to remain with their partner, unless the human partner is unable to care for the Service Animal due to illness or other extenuating circumstances – sterile environments and other specialized environments are excluded from this policy, as noted
- Will not separate or attempt to separate the Service Animal from its partner, unless medically dictated or required
- Will not pet, talk to, or otherwise interact with the Service Animal
- Will, to the best of their ability, educate other patients about the need to ignore the Service Animal
- Will not feed, clean up after, or otherwise care for the Service Animal, unless specifically noted in the admission care plan
- Will not deliberately startle or distract the Service Animal
- Will allow the Service Animal to do its job, as trained and/or as requested/commanded/cued by the human partner

#### B. Patient

- Will maintain control of their Service Animal, via physical, verbal or signaled means, at all times
- Will supervise their Service Animal at all times, including during groups, therapy, outings, recreation, and/or all other activities
- Will keep their Service Animal with them, and not allow their Service Animal to wander, roam, or be alone
- Will care for their Service Animal, including feeding, grooming, toileting, exercising, and any other aspect of care
- Will clean up after their Service Animal promptly and completely
- Will not allow their Service Animal to be disruptive or distracting
- Will ensure their Service Animal does not engage with or otherwise interact with patients, staff, or visitors
- Will provide facility-requested documentation regarding the Service Animal's healthcare and vaccination status
- Will provide proof of licensing, if required by the state, city, or county of residence
- Will be able to describe and/or define the exact tasks and work their animal performs for them
- Will comply with facility policies regarding safety protocols and requirements

### C. Service Animals

- Will be fully housetrained
- Will be well-trained, well-behaved, and well-mannered
- Will be calm and relaxed
- Will be free of timidity, reactivity and aggression in all forms
- Will possess specific, reliable, on-cue task training that directly mitigates the human partner's disability
- Will be responsive to their partner's cues, commands and directives
- Will remain with their partner
- Will show signs of having been trained to ignore distractions
- Will not be disruptive or out of control
- Will not be excessively vocal, including whining, whimpering, barking, woofing, howling, grumbling, or growling
- Will not prevent staff from treating the human partner, even if the human partner is unable to give commands or cues
- Will be vaccinated against all diseases common to that type of animal – for dogs, this includes rabies, distemper, and parvo (Depending on the geographical location, consider including coronavirus, leptospirosis, and/or Lyme disease as required vaccinations.)
- Will be internal and external parasite free
- Will be licensed, if required by the state, county, or city of residence
- Will be healthy and free of all symptoms of illness on admission, including but not limited to, digestive upset, coughing/hacking, rashes/patches/hot spots, coat or skin conditions, and excessive ear shaking/pawing/digging
- Will be well-groomed and odor-free on admission, with a clean coat that's free of mats, dirt and debris
- Will perform their tasks and/or work as needed

### IV. When/If a Service Animal Can Be Asked to Leave

- A. Lack of Housetraining: If a Service Animal displays a lack of housetraining by toileting indoors or in inappropriate places, they will be asked to leave.
- B. Ungroomed/Unclean: If a Service Animal is unkempt, untidy, bedraggled, or ungroomed, they may be asked to leave. This includes Service Animals who are smelly, odorous, matted, and/or dirty, or with obvious coat, skin, ear, or eye issues, or an animal

- with signs/symptoms of external parasites. A Service Animal who is merely wet due to the weather or due to a trip outdoors, but who is otherwise well-groomed, should be considered “clean.”
- C. Unhealthy: If a Service Animal shows signs of illness, they will be asked to leave. A single episode of vomiting or loose stool should not be considered a sign of illness, as this can be a stress response in many animals, although, if the digestive upset continues past a single episode, the animal may be ill and should be examined by a veterinarian.
  - D. Poor Training or Behavior: If a Service Animal’s training is obviously lacking and/or is unreliable, they may be asked to leave. A Service Animal with poor behavior and/or manners will be asked to leave, as poor behavior could pose a direct threat to the health, safety or well-being of others. This includes readily apparent timidity, fear, aggression, and reactivity, as well as overall poor manners or unacceptable responses to every day or common stimuli.
  - E. Disruptive: If a Service Animal is disruptive, unruly or out of control, they may be asked to leave, if the handler does not immediately move to rectify the situation. This includes animals who are overly vocal, disobedient, running around, jumping on people or on furniture/things, or otherwise bringing attention to itself.
  - F. Interference: If a Service Animal is interfering with the way treatment is usually provided, or if they are altering the way things are usually ran, they may be asked to leave.
  - G. If the human partner is asked to remove their Service Animal, they will be provided with specific reasons why. If the handler is able to rectify the issue, the team may be provided another opportunity to remain, although this is at the discretion of our administration. If asked to remove a Service Animal, the human partner is solely responsible for making arrangements for the animal to be removed from facility grounds.

## **V. Requirements, Protocols, and Procedures For Specialized Admission**

Service Animals are permitted, by law, in places of public accommodation, including hospitals and medical treatment/care facilities, as long as members of the public are generally allowed access. Service Animals who are admitted to an area of the hospital where members of the public are generally allowed will not need to abide by specialized protocols

or procedures, except as outlined as medically necessary for hygiene's or treatment's sake.

Service Animals admitted to areas of the hospital not generally accessible by members of the public, including our psychiatric treatment programs, may be required to adhere to the following protocols and procedures, before being allowed access with their partner.

*Please remember having a Service Animal in areas of the facility where members of the public are not generally allowed access is a privilege and not a right. Teams are expected to fully comply with facility guidelines.*

#### A. Mandatory Documentation and Paperwork

Before admission can be considered, the following documentation and paperwork must be provided by the human partner, or by family/friends/agents:

- Legible copy of the dog's current, up-to-date rabies certificate, clearly showing the date given, dog's name, dog's breed, dog's weight, veterinarian's name, signature, and location/contact info, and how long the certificate is good for. 1, 3, and 5 year certificates are all valid, as long as the certificate provided covers the likely length of the admission in its entirety
- Copy of the dog's vaccination history, which should include, at a minimum, up-to-date vaccinations for distemper, parvo, and rabies. The dog's name, breed, and weight on this vaccination history should match the information showcased on the rabies certificate. Titer tests showing acceptable levels of immunity are **(or are not)** permissible for distemper and/or parvo. Titer tests for rabies are not permissible, as rabies is a federally required vaccination for all canines. (Add any other vaccinations your facility would require for admission to this list, and add any vaccinations you would permit titers for to that list.)
- Veterinary proof of on-going preventative treatment for internal and external parasites. Should someone not be able to provide proof of ongoing treatment, then a recent (within 10 days prior to admission) clean fecal and heartworm test must be provided, along with a note on veterinary letterhead that the Service Animal in question is completely free of external parasites
- A written list of the Service Animal's trained tasks and work

- A written list about the Service Animal's food detailing:
  - Brand of food
  - Type of protein in the food
  - Whether or not it's a special diet (like grain free)
  - Optimal feeding times
  - Number of feeding times a day
  - Any regular/routine supplements and medications
- A list of contact information that includes names, phone numbers, email addresses, and, when pertinent, physical addresses, for the following people:
  - Service Animal's regular veterinarian
  - Preferred emergency veterinarian, if different from the regular veterinarian
  - An emergency contact who can be relied upon to retrieve the Service Animal from the facility in the event the human partner is unable to continue caring for the Service Animal, and is unable to personally make arrangements for the Service Animal to be retrieved
- While not required (or if required, note here), if the human partner has any additional documentation, including program graduation certificates, titles/certifications earned, or Public Access Test results, please include copies with the other documentation

## B. Training, Behavior, and Responsiveness

Service Animals admitted to our psychiatric program must be able to work off-leash, as leashes are not permitted or allowed, for safety reasons. If your Service Animal cannot work off-leash, they may not be able to be admitted to our program.

(Lay out any other requirements your facility may have regarding training, behavior, and responsiveness.)

## C. Equipment and Gear

When it comes to equipment and gear, we want to find a happy medium between function and safety. The following lists are not concrete, but rather, serve as guidelines. Each individual teams' needs will be discussed during the intake process, and requirements determined.

### Permitted Gear



- Vests
- Harnesses
- Harnesses With Handles
- Clothes/coats
- Boots
- Soft sided, rubber, or collapsible bowls (if you permit metal or plastic bowls, detail that here)
- Mat/Place/Rug
- Task/work required props, as long as they meet safety requirements

#### Prohibited Gear

- Leashes
- Collars
- Bandanas
- Head halters
- Electronics
- Hard toys and bones
- Muzzles

Include any other examples of gear your facility will or will not allow, and/or specific guidelines for their use, such as if certain items can be checked out or utilized with supervision, like toys during outdoor recreation times, or leashes during staff-supervised trips off unit.

#### D. Feeding and Watering

Lay out special requirements regarding food, such as if a new, unopened bag of food will need to be brought to the facility and all food measured out in front of an intake staff member, so it can be assured nothing has been added, or if only certain types of food are permitted.

Food will need to be specifically prepared for the Service Animal per facility directives. Please follow each step in order to ensure the food won't be refused. Add or modify directions to suit your facility's expectations, rules, and protocols.

- 1) Gather the necessary supplies, which include sealable plastic bags, a clear plastic "tote" container with a lid, a permanent marker.
- 2) Measure out the Service Animal's food into the plastic baggies, with one meal to each baggie. As an example, if a Service Animal

- eats twice daily, then you will need to prepare two baggies of food for each expected day of admission. If someone will be admitted for longer than 7 – 10 days (change this as needed), then regular trips to provide additional food may need to be arranged.
- 3) Mark each baggie with the amount of food contained in the bag. Use a permanent marker or similar tool, so the information is readily visible.
  - 4) Determine how supplements will be handled. If you want people to pre-add the supplements to the baggies of food, great. If supplements need to be brought in their original container so the patient can measure it out and add to the food while under staff supervision, define that. If supplements can't be given out, notate that. If powder/pill/liquid supplements are handled differently, lay out those guidelines.
  - 5) Place the sealed baggies in neat rows inside of the plastic container. Place the lid on the container and give to the intake coordinator.

Bowls need to be made of soft rubber, silicone, or fabric. (Or whatever other material your facility dictates as allowable.) Food will be handed out during routine medication times, which are at approximately 9 am, 1 pm, and 8 pm. (Fill in whatever times are appropriate, or change the construct to suit your needs – perhaps food is handed out after regular unit mealtimes, or on request by the patient). Water will be available to the Service Animal at all times. (Change to suit your needs – available during unit meal times, available on request, etc.)

Include information here about treats, using food for training, or anything else about mealtimes and feeding the Service Animal.

#### E. Toileting

Human partners are responsible for toileting and cleaning up after their Service Animal. Lay out guidelines for toileting and cleaning up. Include information on when the Service Animal can be toileted, how this looks (during regularly scheduled outdoor recreation, during staff-supervised trips outdoors, when a family/friend/agent comes to take the dog out at pre-arranged times, on a pad, etc.), and how cleanup is to be handled (how to get cleanup supplies, where to dispose of waste, hygiene practices, etc.)

## G. Grooming and Hygiene

All Service Animals are expected to be well-groomed and odor free at all times, while in the facility. All grooming and hygiene needs must be attended to by the Service Animal's partner, or a designated agent (if allowed). Lay out expectations and rules regarding grooming supplies and use, supervision requirements, whether or not items have to be returned to staff after use, what kinds of items are permitted, how they should be brought in (small bottles vs. original bottles, opened vs. unopened, etc.), and anything else pertinent.

## H. Exercise

Exercise needs can be attended to during outdoor recreation times or by walking 3-5 laps around the unit of a morning and evening. (Modify this policy to suit your facility's needs. Include whether or not toys are allowed, if toys can be checked out from staff for the Service Animal, and acceptable types of play.)

## VI. Special Circumstances

A. Allergies/Phobias – if a patient or staff member has an allergy or phobia to the Service Animal's species (dog/horse), then our facility will work to accommodate the needs of all involved. An example might be modifying staff schedules or moving patient rooms so contact is minimized.

B. Seclusion and Restraint – Lay out your facility's policy regarding seclusion and restraint, and how/if a Service Animal works into the policies. Will the emergency contact be called to pick the Service Animal up? Will the Service Animal be allowed in seclusion? Are other options available? Etc.

## VII. Complaints and Appeals

Lay out facility guidelines and steps regarding complains and appeals, specifically as it applies to Service Animal accommodation.

**SPECIAL NOTES:** All items in red should be modified or removed to adhere to your facility's guidelines and expectations. Change, add, or remove anything you'd like in order to create your own policy and protocol on Service Animals and their accommodation at your facility. This document is merely a template, and can be utilized, formatted or modified as needed.