

# SERVICE ANIMALS IN THE POST-SECONDARY SETTING

A GUIDE FOR NORTHEASTERN  
UNIVERSITY STAFF AND FACULTY

**PREPARED BY:  
THE DISABILITY  
RESOURCE CENTER**





## DEFINITION

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a service animal is defined as " a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability."

## EXAMPLES OF WORK/TASKS

- GUIDING A PERSON THAT IS BLIND
- ALERTING A PERSON WHO IS DEAF
- RETRIEVING AN OBJECT FOR A PERSON IN A WHEELCHAIR
- PROTECTING A PERSON WHO IS HAVING A SEIZURE
- REMINDING A PERSON WITH MENTAL ILLNESS TO TAKE PRESCRIBED MEDICATIONS
- CALMING A PERSON BY WITH POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) PERFORMING A SPECIFIC TASK DURING AN ANXIETY ATTACK



# WHAT SERVICE ANIMALS ARE... AND ARE NOT

## ARE:

- Dogs of any breed or size.
- Trained to perform a task “directly related to a person’s disability.”

## ARE NOT:

- Required to go through professional training or be certified by an agency.
- Required to wear a specific vest, harness or identification of any kind.
- Meant to serve a sole purpose of providing emotional support.



**IN SITUATIONS WHERE IT IS NOT OBVIOUS THAT A DOG IS A SERVICE ANIMAL, A STAFF MEMBER CAN ONLY ASK TWO QUESTIONS TO THE HANDLER...**

- 1) Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- 2) What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

At no point can you...

- Request the dog's registration, licensing, or certification documentation
- Require the dog to demonstrate a task
- Ask about the nature of the handler's disability

## WHEN A SERVICE ANIMAL CAN BE KEPT OUT

- If the presence of the service animal would “fundamentally alter” the nature of services, programs, or activities provided to the public.
  - In most settings and circumstances, a service animal’s presences would not pose a fundamental alteration.

## WHEN A SERVICE ANIMAL CAN BE REMOVED

- The dog is not housebroken.
- The dog is out of control, and the handler cannot get the dog under control.

**Dog-related fear/anxiety or allergies are not considered “valid” reasons under the ADA for the exclusion of service animals.**





# What Might it Look Like to Have a Service Animal in the Classroom?

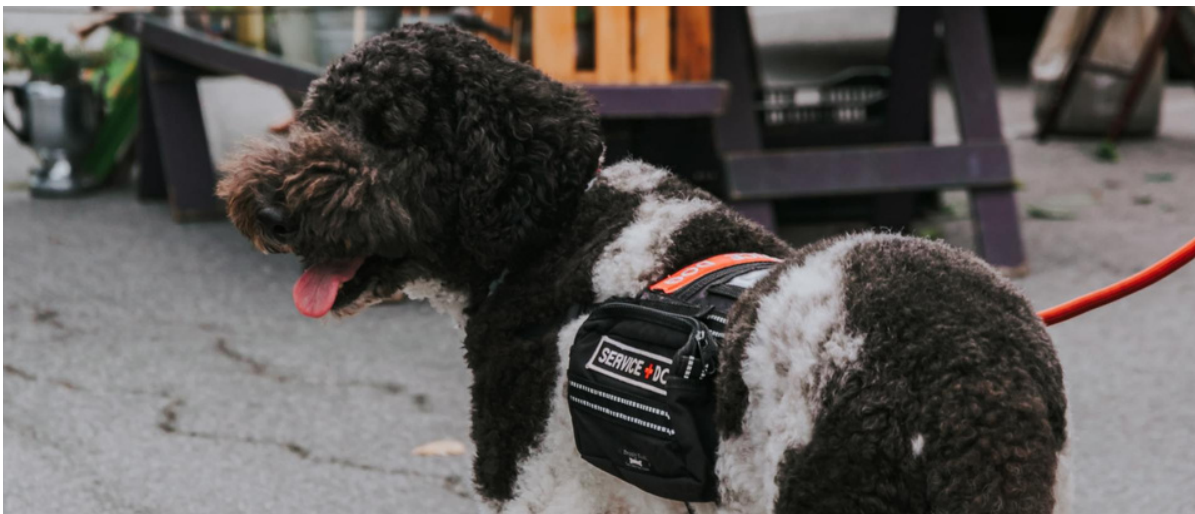
- The service animal may be seated or laying underneath, next to, or close by the student's desk area.
- The service animal will be harnessed, leashed, or tethered unless this interferes with the service animal's work or the person's disability prevents their use. In that case, the person will use voice or signals to control the animal.
- The service animal should be ignored while it is on duty by everyone except the student.
- If you choose to assign seats in your classroom/lecture hall, ensure that the student with the service dog is seated in an area that offers space and easy access to the door.
- If another student discloses a fear or allergy, reasonable accommodations must be made to ensure that the student with the service animal is able to access the class (e.g., seating the students on opposite sides of the room, moving to a different section of the class).



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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- Are service animals-in-training any different fully trained service animals?
  - No, in the state of Massachusetts. Service animals-in-training are given the same status and protections as those that are fully trained.
- Will I ever hear a service animal bark?
  - A service animal may bark once, particularly if it has been provoked; however, if the dog is barking repeatedly this may suggest it is not under control and can be asked to leave. If this happens, the student should be given an alternative modality to engage with the class and/or the opportunity to make up any missed work.
- What is the difference between an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) and a service animal?
  - An Emotional Support Animal's sole purpose is to provide emotional support and comfort to the owner; thus, the ESA is to be kept in the student's dorm room at all times unless using the bathroom. Service animals are legally considered the same as a medical device, such as a wheelchair, which means they can go anywhere the student can go unless the animal's presence would pose a fundamental alteration to the environment.
- Are all service animals registered with the DRC?
  - While we encourage all students with service animals to register with our office, by law they are not required to do so.





**FOR ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR CONSULTATION  
SURROUNDING SERVICE ANIMALS REACH OUT TO  
THE DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER!**

**Via email at [DRC@northeastern.edu](mailto:DRC@northeastern.edu)**

**Or stop by 20 Dodge Hall**

**Thank you for your time and support!**



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