

Sebastopol Area Senior Center

Policy on Bringing Animals into the Senior Center

Updated 4/4/2023

The Sebastopol Area Senior Center has a “no animal” policy inside our Center and at The Legacy resale shop (The Senior Center and The Legacy combined are referred as “Center” going forward in this document). We love pets too however for the health and safety of our patrons and employees, we ask that you do not take your pet into the Senior Center or The Legacy.

The Center follows the federal Americans with Disabilities Act “the ADA” which means that only “Service Animals” are exempt from this requirement.

II. Service Animal Defined by Title II and Title III of the ADA (excerpted from [https://adata.org/sites/adata.org/files/files/Service Animal Booklet 2014\(2\).pdf](https://adata.org/sites/adata.org/files/files/Service_Animal_Booklet_2014(2).pdf) retrieved 4/3/23)

“A service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Tasks performed can include, among other things, pulling a wheelchair, retrieving dropped items, alerting a person to a sound, reminding a person to take medication, or pressing an elevator button.

Emotional support animals, comfort animals, and therapy dogs are not service animals under Title II and Title III of the ADA. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not considered service animals either. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability. It does not matter if a person has a note from a doctor that states that the person has a disability and needs to have the animal for emotional support. A doctor’s letter does not turn an animal into a service animal.

Examples of animals that fit the ADA’s definition of “service animal” because they have been specifically trained to perform a task for the person with a disability:

Guide Dog or Seeing Eye® Dog is a carefully trained dog that serves as a travel tool for persons who have severe visual impairments or are blind.

Hearing or Signal Dog is a dog that has been trained to alert a person who has a significant hearing loss or is deaf when a sound occurs, such as a knock on the door.

Psychiatric Service Dog is a dog that has been trained to perform tasks that assist individuals with disabilities to detect the onset of psychiatric episodes and lessen their effects. Tasks performed by psychiatric service animals may include reminding the handler to take medicine; providing safety checks or room searches or turning on lights for persons with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; interrupting self-mutilation by persons with dissociative identity disorders; and keeping disoriented individuals from danger.

SSigDOG (sensory signal dogs or social signal dogs) is a dog trained to assist a person with autism. The dog alerts the handler to distracting repetitive movements common among those with autism, allowing the person to stop the movement (e.g., hand flapping).

Seizure Response Dog is a dog trained to assist a person with a seizure disorder. How the dog serves the person depends on the person's needs. The dog may stand guard over the person during a seizure, or the dog may go for help. A few dogs have learned to predict a seizure and warn the person in advance to sit down or move to a safe place.

Under the Title II and III of the ADA, service animals are limited to dogs. However, entities must make reasonable modifications in policies to allow individuals with disabilities to use miniature horses if they have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for individuals with disabilities.

III. Other Support or Therapy Animals

While Emotional Support Animals or Comfort 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 phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. Even though some states have laws defining therapy animals, these animals are not limited to working with people with disabilities and therefore are not covered by federal laws protecting the use of service animals. Therapy animals provide people with therapeutic contact, usually in a clinical setting, to improve their physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning.”

From the State of California Department of Rehabilitation

(<https://www.dor.ca.gov/Home/ServiceAnimals> retrieved 4/3/23) states:

“Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.

Examples of such work or tasks include 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, or performing other duties. **Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or**

task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), businesses and organizations that serve the public must allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into all areas of the facility where customers are normally allowed to go. This federal law applies to all businesses open to the public, including restaurants, hotels, taxis and shuttles, grocery and department stores, hospitals and medical offices, theaters, health clubs, parks, and zoos.”

If you ask us to allow you to bring in an animal/pet, we are allowed by federal law to ask you two questions:

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

If at all possible, when registering for a class, or coming by, please tell us you have a service animal so we can make any necessary accommodations so that other patrons with potential need for accommodation can also be accommodated. It is our goal to meet ADA federal law and accommodate people with disabilities who need a service animal while at our Center.

The Senior Center may ask an individual with a disability to remove a service animal if the animal is not housebroken or is out of control and the individual is not able to control it. A service animal must have a harness, leash or other tether, unless the handler is unable to use a tether because of a disability or the use of a tether would interfere with the service animal's ability to safely perform its work or tasks. In these cases, the service animal must be under the handler's control through voice commands, hand signals, or other effective means. If a service animal is excluded, the individual with a disability must still be offered the opportunity to obtain goods, services, and accommodations without having the service animal on the premises.

California State Law (CSL) Makes falsely claiming an animal to be a service animal a misdemeanor, punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for six month or a fine up to \$1000 or both. Cal. Penal Code § 365.7 (1994), Cal. Food & Agriculture Code § 30850(b) (2004) chrome-
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