

Rita and Truett Smith Public Library
Animals in the Library
Draft Policy July 2022

It is the policy of the Rita and Truett Smith Public Library to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which states we must allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of the facility where the public is allowed to go.

Only service animals are allowed in Library facilities, with the exception of assistance animal trainees and animals featured in programs sponsored by the Library.

Definitions

According to ADA, service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. 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. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition.

When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions:

- Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- 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.

In order to help maintain a pleasant, productive and safe environment for all Library users and staff, the following behavioral guidelines for service animals must be observed:

- Service animals must be in physical proximity to their handler and under handler control at all times.
- Service animals may not be left unattended by their handler at any time.
- Service animals must be on a leash or harness at all times unless the use of a leash or harness interferes with the animal's effective performance of its designated task(s). If the animal cannot be leashed or harnessed, it must be under the handler's control via voice, signals or other effective means at all times.
- Animal handlers are expected to address any behavior such as barking and growling that disrupts the environment of the Library.
- Service animals must be housebroken and their handler is responsible for any upkeep or clean-up of the animal.

Allergies or fear of animals are not valid reasons for denying access to the Library facility or refusing Library service to people with service animals. The Library will do everything possible to accommodate the needs of all patrons within reason and relocate them so that they may also use the facility comfortably.

Any animal that displays aggressive behavior towards patrons or fails to comply with this policy will be asked to leave.