



ANIMALS IN THE LIBRARY

The Meriden Public Library recognizes the legal rights afforded under applicable federal and state laws regarding the use of service animals while also being considerate of the safety and well-being of all patrons and the Library staff.

It is the policy of the Meriden Public Library to prohibit all animals from entering library facilities, excepting service animals, service animal trainees and animals featured in programs sponsored by the Library. Persons bringing in animals other than service animals will be asked to remove them. Under the ADA, a service animal is any dog or miniature horse individually trained to benefit a person with a disability by assisting with the physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.

Connecticut's public accommodations law protects only those who use service dogs for certain disabilities. Those who are blind must be allowed to bring their guide dogs into public accommodations. The law also protects those who are deaf or have a mobility impairment and use assistance dogs. People who use service dogs for other disabilities, such as psychiatric disabilities or intellectual disabilities, are not protected by Connecticut law. However, as noted below, the ADA does protect those with other disabilities, and public accommodations in Connecticut must comply with the ADA.

Under the ADA, a service animal is a dog that has been trained to perform disability-related tasks for the benefit of a person with a physical *or* mental disability. In some cases, a miniature horse may also qualify as a service animal. In addition to guide dogs and hearing dogs, here are some examples of service animals that must be allowed into public accommodations under the ADA:

- psychiatric service animals, which help their handlers manage mental and emotional disabilities by, for example, interrupting self-harming behaviors, reminding handlers to take medication, checking spaces for intruders, or providing calming pressure during anxiety or panic attacks
- seizure alert animals, which let their handlers know of impending seizures, and may also guard their handlers during seizure activity, and
- allergen alert animals, which let their handlers know of foods or other substances that could be dangerous (such as peanuts).

Neither Connecticut law nor the ADA cover what some people call "emotional support animals": animals whose presence provides a sense of safety, companionship, and comfort to those with psychiatric or emotional conditions. Although these animals often have therapeutic benefits, they are not trained to perform specific tasks for people with disabilities.

When it is not obvious what service a service animal provides, anyone bringing a service dog or miniature horse into a library facility may be asked the following questions:

1. Is this animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task is this animal trained to provide?

A staff member attempting to ascertain whether a dog is a service animal will never ask about the nature of a person's disability.

According to CT law, the owner can show the animal's tag or must present documentation that the dog has been appropriately trained as a service dog and is therefore eligible for a license.

Individuals with service animals may bring those animals into all areas of the Library where members of the public are normally allowed to go, unless the physical size of the animal precludes access. Owners/handlers must keep service animals with them and under their custody and control at all times. If a service animal cannot be leashed or harnessed, due to disability or interference with the performance of task(s), it must be otherwise clearly under the handler's control (e.g., voice control, signals, or other effective means). Owners of service animals are solely responsible for the supervision, behavior and care of the service animal while on Library property. Service animals are not allowed on library furniture or fixtures, or in library baskets or carts, and must remain on the floor or be carried (as appropriate) by their handlers at all times.

Anytime a service animal is behaving in a manner incompatible with the essential purposes of the Library, staff will direct that the service animal be brought into conformity, be relocated, or leave the Library. Incompatible behavior includes barking, growling or other noise, urinating/defecating on the floor, occupying areas other than the floor, leaving the side of the owner, biting or threatening actions, or damaging Library property. Misrepresenting a dog as a service animal may result in suspension of library privileges.

Anyone who believes they were unfairly denied the ability to bring or maintain a service animal on Library property may submit a written request for reconsideration to the attention of the Library Director, Meriden Public Library, 105 Miller Street, Meriden, CT 06450.