

Dear Business Owner / Manager,

Are you concerned about the growing number of people who misrepresent their pets as service dogs? Have you ever suspected that someone was trying to pass off a pet as a service dog, but were uncertain about how to handle the situation? The purpose of this letter is to let you know that the overwhelming majority of people who use trained service dogs are on your side. We share your concern, and would like you to know what your rights are so that you can help keep public spaces safe for all who want to patronize businesses, whether or not they are accompanied by a service dog.

Answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about the rights of business owners and the rights of their customers who are accompanied by their service dogs follow. A service dog is a dog trained to perform specific tasks for a person with a disability that mitigates his/her disability. Some examples of tasks service dogs perform include guiding those who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, performing a specific action that reminds a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, or performing a behavior designed to interrupt anxiety or panic for a person with PTSD.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects the rights of equal access to all public places and businesses for persons with disabilities, including those who use service dogs. If someone enters your place of business with a dog and it is not obvious what service the dog provides, the law provides that you or your Staff may ask two questions:

1. Is your dog a service dog that is required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform for you?

If the person with the dog doesn't answer these questions, you have a right to deny them access to your business. If the person has an



obvious disability, however, it is probably best to give the person the benefit of the doubt. Please also keep the following points in mind:

- Neither you nor your staff may 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 the task.
- When a customer visits your business with a service dog, the customer is likely to be grateful for a courteous greeting and a sincere offer to assist.
- If a service dog is disrupting customers, you have the authority under the ADA to request that the handler control his or her dog. If the handler is unable to control the dog, you have the legal right to ask the handler to remove the dog from the premises.

On behalf of those of us who depend on our service dogs for our independence and freedom, thank you for making your business an accessible, positive, and welcoming environment for all customers. I hope this information is helpful to you. If you have additional questions, please visit [guidedogs.com](http://guidedogs.com) to learn more about how guide dogs are trained for service.

Yours sincerely,

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Alumni Association Board of Directors

For additional information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

[http://www.ada.gov/service\\_animals\\_2010.htm](http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm) or 800-514-0301  
[www.guidedogs.com](http://www.guidedogs.com)



**Guide Dogs for the Blind**

[guidedogs.com](http://guidedogs.com)

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