



SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

The federal Fair Housing Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Washington State Law Against Discrimination, and local fair housing laws require that housing owners and managers provide reasonable accommodations for applicants and residents who have disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are changes in rules, policies, practices, or services that are necessary for a person with a disability to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling. Allowing residents who have disabilities to live with their service animals is reasonable accommodation. Under fair housing laws, a person is considered to be disabled if s/he has a sensory, mental or physical condition that substantially limits one or more major life activities (such as walking, seeing, hearing, working, etc.). The state law definition includes disabilities that are temporary or permanent, common or uncommon, mitigated or unmitigated. Some people have a disability-related need for service animals to assist them with the functional limitations caused by their disabilities.

Service animals are NOT pets.

HOW DO FAIR HOUSING LAWS DEFINE SERVICE ANIMALS?

Fair Housing Act (FHA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (504) These laws do not specifically define “assistance animals”; however, they require the provision of “reasonable accommodations” for people with disabilities, which include assistance animals.

For the purposes of compliance with the FHA and 504, HUD has defined assistance animals as: “animals that serve as a reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities by assisting those individuals in some identifiable way by making it possible for them to make more effective use of their housing. Such animals are often referred to as ‘service animals, assistive animals, support animals, or therapeutic animals’ and may include any animal that actually performs tasks or a service for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with hearing impairments to sounds, pulling a wheelchair, fetching items or providing emotional support to people with mental disabilities.”

WHAT IS A SERVICE ANIMAL?

Service animals assist people with disabilities to deal with the effects of their disabilities. The most common service animals are dogs, but they may be other species (a cat, bird, hamster, rabbit, pot-bellied pig, reptile, etc.). Service animals may be of any breed, size or weight. Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars or harnesses. Service animals are not required to have special licenses, to be certified by any government or training agency, or to have any visible identification.

NOTE: In some situations, a person with a disability may require more than one service animal, where each animal provides a different type of assistance. For example, an individual may need both a hearing dog and a seizure alert animal.

NOT ALL ANIMALS CAN BE SERVICE ANIMALS!

In Washington state, it is illegal to possess any wild animal that naturally lives in the state, such as squirrels, crows or deer. It is also illegal to possess dangerous wild exotic animals:

RCW §16-30: No person may possess ... a potentially dangerous animal, including but not limited to large cats, wolves, bears, hyenas, non-human primates, ... and various species of venomous snakes.

WHAT DO SERVICE ANIMALS DO?

Service animals perform various tasks and provide services for people with disabilities, who can train their own service animals. Here are some examples:

Guide – serves as a travel aide for a person who is legally blind.

Hearing or signal – alerts a person with hearing loss or deafness when a sound occurs, such as an alarm or a knock on the door.

Mobility assistance – helps a person who has a mobility or health disability. They may carry, fetch, open doors, ring doorbells, activate elevator buttons, pull a wheelchair, steady a person while walking, help someone get up after a fall, etc.

Seizure response – warns a person of an impending seizure, or provides aid during a seizure, such as going for help or standing guard over the person.

Companion or Therapeutic assistance – aids people with cognitive or psychological disabilities, ameliorating the effects of a mental or emotional disability, and allowing them

to live more independently. These animals may perform tasks, such as: bring an emergency phone during a crisis, dial 911, turn on lights in a dark room, bring medications, bark for help in an emergency, assist a person with panic disorder in coping with crowds, etc.

According to HUD, “emotional support animals provide very private functions for people with mental and emotional disabilities. Specifically, emotional support animals by their very nature, and without training, may relieve depression and anxiety, and help reduce stress induced pain in people with certain medical conditions affected by stress.”

REQUEST FOR A SERVICE ANIMAL ACCOMMODATION

If you need to live with a service animal because of your disability, make a request to your landlord or manager for a reasonable accommodation. It is best to submit these requests in writing, but verbal requests are acceptable.

VERIFICATION OF YOUR DISABILITY AND NEED FOR A SERVICE ANIMAL

You may be asked to provide written verification that you have a disability and that the accommodation of a service animal is necessary to give you an equal opportunity to use and enjoy your housing. If your landlord or manager asks for this verification, you should obtain a signed letter from your doctor or other medical professional, or other qualified third party who, in their professional capacity, has knowledge about your disability and your need for a reasonable accommodation. You do not have to provide details about your disability or about the specific tasks the service animal performs.

ANIMAL CARE AND SUPERVISION

You are responsible for the care of your service animal. You must supervise your animal and maintain full control of it at all times. This means that while the animal is in common areas, it is on a leash, harnessed, in a carrier, or otherwise in your direct control. When in the presence of others, the animal is expected to be well behaved (not jumping on or nipping at people, not snarling or barking, etc.).

You are responsible for the proper disposal of animal waste!

- Carry equipment to clean up your service animal’s feces whenever the animal is in the common areas.
- Properly dispose of animal waste and/or litter.
- If you need assistance with cleanup, arrange for such help through family, friends or advocates.

PROBLEMS

If you believe your request for a service animal is not being handled properly, contact Nikki Quinn, nikki@hammerpropertiesnw.com.