

City of Edmonton

The logo for the City of Edmonton, featuring the word "Edmonton" in white text on a dark blue square background.

Corporate Guideline for Service Dogs

corporate.accessibility@edmonton.ca
edmonton.ca/accessibility

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Programs Impacted:

Positive Employee Experience

People Relationships and Partnerships

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Edmonton aims to foster an inclusive environment for members of the public and employees. This includes providing reasonable accommodations and the development of guidelines in line with [the Alberta Human Rights Act](#), [the Service Dogs Act](#), and [the Blind Persons' Rights Act](#).

The Service Dogs Act prohibits the discrimination of any person with respect to their service dog or from being denied accommodations, services, or facilities available in any place to which the public is customarily admitted.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance, information, and resources to employees and business areas when addressing questions, concerns, or developing business area specific policies or procedures related to service dogs.

These guidelines were developed in consultation with the CNIB Foundation and the Government of Alberta, Service dog Legislation.



What is a Service Dog?

The *Service Dogs Act* defines a service dog as, "a dog trained as a guide for a disabled person having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations." This Act further defines a disabled person as, "an individual who has any degree of disability except blindness or visual impairment and is dependent upon a service dog".

Examples of service dogs include:

- Allergy detection dogs
- Autism service dogs
- Diabetic alert dogs
- Hearing dogs
- Mobility assistance dogs
- Psychiatric service dogs
- Seizure alert dogs



Only dogs and no other species of animals are considered for certification as a service dog under the legislation.

What is a Guide Dog?

A guide dog is a specific type of service dog that is afforded its own legislation. The *Blind Persons' Rights Act* defines a guide dog as, "a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the [regulations](#)".



What is not a Service Dog?

Sometimes the terms "emotional support dog" or "therapy dog" are used to describe a Service Dog. Therapy animals are used by therapists for short-term therapeutic purposes. Emotional support animals are often used for providing support, comfort and security to individuals with psychological or developmental disabilities.

It is important to recognize that these terms are not applicable to the *Service Dog Act* or the *Blind Person's Rights Act*. However, while not specifically addressed, the *Alberta Human Rights Act* does still apply for emotional support and therapy dogs for someone who has a disability.

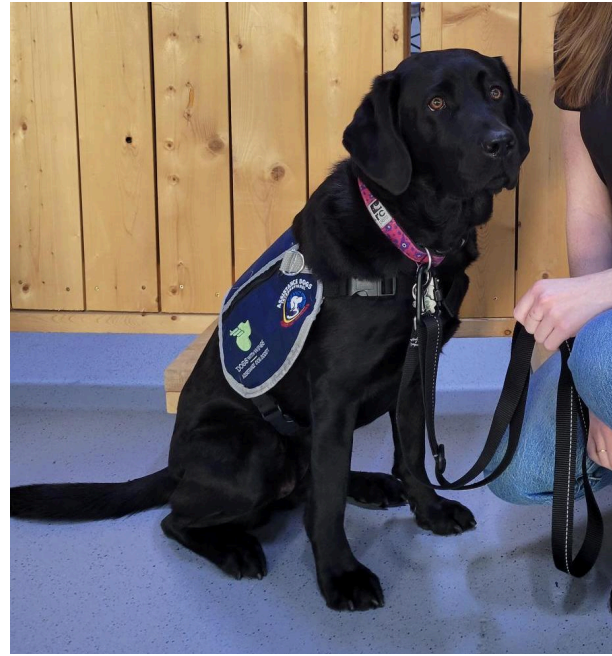
Building and property owners/managers may have a duty to accommodate persons with disabilities with other types of animals (eg, therapy or emotional support animals). Whether there is a duty to accommodate depends on whether there is reliable medical evidence confirming a person's disability and the person's dependence on the animal. If you have questions about how to handle a matter related to an emotional support or therapy dog, please consult with the appropriate legal services representative for assistance. If a person asserts a need for an accommodation allowing a therapy or emotional support animal to have access to a City facility and it is not feasible to contact a legal services representative, allow the person and the animal to remain (if safe and feasible) until the circumstances can be fully evaluated. In the event of this circumstance, utilize the expected behaviours listed on page 7 of this guide to determine if it is feasible for the therapy or emotional support animal to remain.

What is a Facility Dog?

A "Facility Dog" is a dog who has met the same skill qualifications as service dogs, but is not covered under the Service Dog Act of Alberta. These dogs are not trained to support their individual handler, but rather are utilized by organizations such as child advocacy centers, victim services units, hospitals

etc. to support various numbers of people including children, victims, and patients.

While there is no legal obligation to accommodate the presence of a "Facility Dog", a handler may ask permission for access to a facility when accompanying those they are supporting off-site of their organization's premises. Business areas and employees should be aware of this type of request should it arise, and where possible should be open to accommodating subject to the dog's behavior being in line with the expectations from a service dog.



How to identify a Service Dog?

A Service Dog Identification Card, issued by the Government of Alberta, verifies that an individual and their service dog have protected public access rights in Alberta. Each ID card has:

- the name of handler and dog
- a photo of the handler and dog
- a validation number
- date of expiration



Note: Persons who falsely claim to have a service dog are guilty of an offense and liable for a fine of up to \$300.

Service dogs should be wearing the accessories and identification appropriate for their work. Many service dogs wear a vest for identification

while guide dogs typically wear specialized harnesses with handles for guiding. However, **the best and first method employed to identify a service or a guide dog is through their behavior.**



Dogs handled by certified trainers have full access rights and can produce an identification from an approved school. Service Dogs receive extensive training on obedience and behavior in addition to specific training related to their field of work. Handlers are also trained to keep their dogs well trained and well presented, including routine grooming. A service dog should:

- not solicit attention, visit or annoy any member of the general public
- not disrupt the normal course of business
- not vocalize unnecessarily, i.e. barking, growling or whining
- show no aggression towards people or other animals
- not solicit or steal food or other items from the general public
- work calmly and quietly in a harness, leash
- be able to perform tasks in public without showing distress or avoidance
- be able to lie quietly beside the handler without blocking aisles, doorways, etc
- stay within 24 inches of their handler at all times unless the nature of a trained task requires them to be working at a greater distance



Respect for service dogs and handlers

If the dog is wearing the appropriate vest or harness and is behaving as expected, it may not be necessary to ask the handler to show their identification.

Please do not ask to pet the dog as the dog is working. There is also no reason to ask the handler why they have a service dog (invasion of privacy).

What to do if a Service Dog is not behaving as expected?

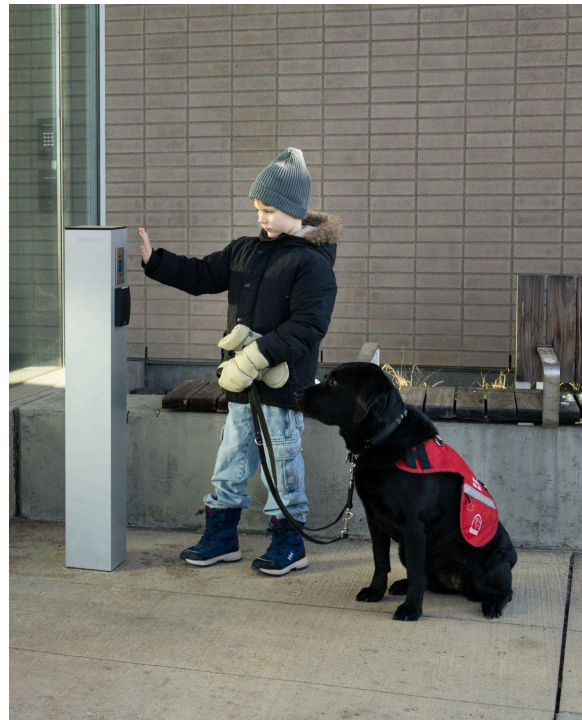
Approach the handler if you notice that a service dog is not behaving as expected. It is important to be respectful and the following are the steps you can take to ensure that.

1. Introduce yourself and include the business area that you work for.
2. Describe the dog's concerning behavior
3. Ask if they are a certified service dog
4. If so, politely ask if you may see their Service Dog Identification Card
5. If they are certified, ask if there is a way the behavior can be managed in an acceptable manner.
6. If they are not certified, are unable to produce identification, or are unable to manage the dog's behavior, they are not afforded protection under the Service Dogs Act and you may **politely** explain to them that they are not protected under the Service Dogs Act and ask them to leave the premises. For tools and training on how to handle challenging interactions, check out [this link to Connected City](#).

BUSINESS AREA SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE DOGS

Why do some business areas need unique guidelines?

The service your business area provides may have unique characteristics that need to be considered relative to a service dog in order to ensure the health and safety of employees, members of the public, and the service dog themselves. For example; Fort Edmonton Park and the Edmonton Valley Zoo both have other animals on site, resulting in unique risks that require consideration in the context of a service dog being



present. These risks include the transmission of animal to animal disease, or the reactions of other animals towards a service dog.

Examples of existing business area specific Service Dog Guidelines are:

- [Identifying Service Dogs by Fort Edmonton Park](#)
- [Service Animal Policy - Edmonton Valley Zoo](#)
- [Support Animals Guidelines by Community Recreation & Culture](#)
- [Service Dogs on Transit by Edmonton Transit Service](#)

If your business area has a specific guideline or needs support in developing one, contact corporate.accessibility@edmonton.ca

SERVICE DOGS IN THE WORKPLACE

Accommodating Services Dogs in the Workplace

As an employer, the City is committed to ensuring that we are respectful, inclusive and equitable so that all employees have what they need to succeed. The [Duty to Accommodate Disabilities Administrative Directive](#) recognizes the City's legal duty to protect its employees with mental or physical disabilities from discrimination in employment by reasonable efforts to accommodate their disability to the point of Undue Hardship. In addition, the [Duty to Accommodate Framework Agreement](#) is an agreement between the City and its Unions and Associations that outlines the agreed upon process for accommodating employees with disabilities and includes a separate dispute resolution process for addressing disputes as they relate to the accommodation.

As per the direction from the Alberta Human Rights Commission each accommodation is considered on its own unique set of circumstances. As it relates to Service Dogs in the workplace, no two accommodations are treated exactly the same.



If you or your employee has obtained a service dog, or is considering doing so, your [Disability Management Consultant](#) can assist you with navigating the accommodation process and ways to support you.

Preparing the Workplace for a Service Dog

What does a service dog need?



Employees will have different requirements for their canine partner depending on their role. In general, a service dog is going to need space to curl up, access to a bowl of water, and a space and opportunity for the dog to relieve themselves. The employee can help to determine what kind of space and equipment might be required for them.

Occupational Health and Safety

City employees work in a variety of environments, hazards to one service dog may not be relevant to another. Employee responsibilities and hazards to dogs should be identified and mitigated, wherever possible. Consult with the [Safety Professional](#) responsible for your business area to ensure the service dog and their handler's unique needs are considered.

What about conflicting employee needs?


There are examples of where an employee's need for a Service Dog may conflict with the needs of their colleagues. For example, pet allergies, cultural

sensitivities, and fear of dogs may be factors that require consideration when making an accommodation for a Service Dog. While these factors do require consideration they should not prevent an accommodation, rather the goal is to strike a balance between the needs of the Service Dog Handler and others in the workplace. If a similar situation is encountered, consult with your [Disability Management Consultant](#).


Communicating to others in the workplace

When a staff member with a service dog begins integration into the workplace, an email or communication from leadership letting coworkers know about the presence of a service dog can help to prepare others in the workspace.

Signage may be posted in consultation with the employee to let visitors know about the presence of a service dog to reduce surprise when encountering a dog in the workplace. The purpose of signage is to let coworkers know of the dog's presence and etiquette.



Service Dog Team in the workplace

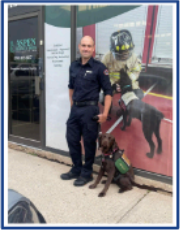


Please understand:

- If she is wearing her vest, she is working for me.
- It is not appropriate to ask what she is trained for, or what she does.
- Not all injuries are visible.

Please Do Not:

- Distract, interact, or talk to the dog.
- Stare or maintain eye contact with the dog.
- Ask to pet the dog.



For more education or information, please visit:

- Aspen Service Dogs <https://aspenservicedogs.com/>
- Service Dogs Act of Alberta <https://www.ap.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=ScD%20Act&type=Acts&id=149&order=1>
- Good Therapy's Supporting People with Service Animals: A Guide to Etiquette <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog-supporting-people-with-service-animals-guide-to-etiquette-021618>

Ask the handler for guidance

Co-workers must ask the handler as to how or whether they may interact with the dog and should never interfere with the duties being performed by the dog. Furthermore, they must respect a dog handler's privacy and refrain from asking the handler the reason they have a service dog.



A guide dog is tasked with guiding its handler around obstacles and keeping them safe while they navigate from one place to another. Attempting to touch or engage with a guide dog while it is working can distract it from performing its duties. This can put both the dog and the handler's safety at risk. Even if the dog does not appear to be working in a safety critical situation, distracting the dog can hinder training efforts and detract from their effectiveness in other situations. Generally, **guide dogs are working whenever they have their harness on**, but it is always important to ask the handler if it is okay to interact with the dog, regardless of whether it is in harness or not.

REFERENCE LINKS

1. [Alberta Human Rights Act](#)
2. [Alberta Service Dogs Act](#)
3. [Blind Persons' Rights Act](#)
4. [CNIB Foundation](#)
5. [Service Dogs at the City of Edmonton](#)
6. [Service Dogs on Transit](#)
7. [Edmonton Valley Zoo Service Animal Policy](#)
8. [Community Recreation & Culture Support Animals Guidelines](#)
9. [Fort Edmonton Park - Identifying Service Dogs](#)
10. [Public Accommodations Framework](#) - Any public accommodation requests relating to emotional support and therapy dogs must be tracked using the Public Accommodations Framework.