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STATE OF CONNECTICUT WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION

POLICY REGARDING SERVICE ANIMALS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The Workers' Compensation Commission (WCC) is committed to providing and promoting equal opportunity in all its services. Accordingly, it is the policy of WCC to provide access to all its programs, facilities, and services to persons with disabilities in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Service animals play an important role in ensuring the independence of people with disabilities. It is, therefore, our policy to welcome any service animal to accompany any individual with a disability into all areas of our facilities where members of the public are permitted to go. **No individual with a disability shall be refused or denied access to WCC's programs, facilities, or services because that individual is accompanied by a service animal.**

What is a service animal?

Service animals are defined as dogs or miniature horses (see below) that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. 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 a Post Traumatic Stress Injury (PTSI) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties.

Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task an animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. **An animal whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support does not qualify as a service animal under the ADA.**

How to Determine if an Animal is a Service Animal

Service animals come in all breeds and sizes. Service animals are not required to wear vests or other identifiers indicating they are service animals, and the person using the service animal is not required to submit documentation of their disability or the service animal's training/qualifications.

If it is unclear whether an animal is a service animal, **only two questions may be asked:**

1. Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What service is the animal trained to perform?

Every effort should be made to work with a person using a service animal to ensure that the person has equal access to services, programs, and facilities.

Additional Information

- According to Connecticut law, dogs, including service animals, must be licensed by the community where they reside.
- Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered unless the person's disability interferes with using those devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
- Service animals must be under the control of the person using the animal at all times.
- The person using the service animal is responsible for the animal. Staff are not required to feed or care for a service animal.
- A service animal can be excluded or removed from a facility, program, or activity when:
 - There is a direct threat to the safety and health of others, or the animal has a history of such behavior.
 - The animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it.
 - The animal is not housebroken.
- If a legitimate reason exists to ask for the service animal to be removed, the person using the animal must be notified of the reason for the decision to remove or exclude the animal. In addition, the person with the disability must be offered the opportunity to obtain services without the animal present.

Service animals cannot be removed or excluded from programs, services, or facilities due to other peoples' objections, allergic reactions, or disabilities. In such situations, staff will make every effort to provide equal access to both the person using the service animal and any person with a disability or objection to the service animal.

Miniature Horses

Miniature horses that have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities must be permitted in WCC facilities where reasonable. Miniature horses generally range in height from 24 inches to 34 inches measured to the shoulders and generally weigh between 70 and 100 pounds.

The following factors should be considered in determining whether miniature horses can be accommodated in a facility:

- Whether the miniature horse is housebroken
- Whether the miniature horse is under the owner's control
- Whether the facility can accommodate the miniature horse's type, size, and weight.
- Whether the miniature horse's presence will compromise legitimate safety requirements necessary for the safe operation of the facility.