

## Service Animals

### Background

Service animal has a specific definition under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); a dog individually trained to perform a task for a person with a disability. A service animal can be any type of dog, but it cannot be another kind of animal with the single exception of a miniature horse. Service animals are typically allowed to go wherever the public is permitted.

To learn more, visit:

- The Northeast ADA Center's [Service Animal Overview](#)
- [Service Animals in Public Spaces](#)
- The Department of Justice's [Frequently Asked Questions About Service Animals and the ADA](#)

### Conversation Guide

When speaking to children about service animals, it is important to convey the key concepts to them in language or terminology that is meaningful to them. Here is a sample suggestion of how this might be done.

#### What Are Service Animals?

Service animals are special helpers trained to support people with disabilities. They aren't just pets—they have important jobs that help their owners stay safe and live more independently.

Most service animals are dogs because they are smart, loyal, and easy to train. These amazing animals can do all kinds of tasks, like:

- Guiding people who are blind so they don't bump into things
- Alerting people who are deaf to sounds like doorbells or alarms
- Helping people in wheelchairs by opening doors or picking things up
- Noticing when their owner might have a medical emergency, like a seizure, and getting help



Service animals are allowed in many places where regular pets can't go—like stores, restaurants, and even schools—because their job is so important!

### **How Should You Act Around a Service Animal?**

It's really important not to distract a service animal while it's working. That means:

- Don't pet or feed the animal
- Don't call out to it or try to play
- Always ask the owner before talking about or interacting with their animal

Remember, these animals are like superheroes on duty!