



There is nothing that our founder, Janie Heinrich, and her service dog Beckett cannot figure out when they walk or roll out the front door, despite the myriad challenges of traveling in public places with a service dog. Below is a list of some of your rights with a service dog in various situations. You will be challenged by businesses and public venues that will refuse you entry because you have a dog. You need to consider whether you will be willing to politely and kindly stand up for your rights in these situations, before you commit to having a service dog of your own or to being a puppy raiser.

MSD-WCP's goal is to educate both you and public venues and facilitate smooth Handler and Service Dog access. We will be here for you, but you will be the one having to stand up for yourself in each situation. The ADA requires service dogs to be permitted into public areas and provide reasonable accommodations to allow that access, but not everyone knows that. Here are some things to know before becoming a Service Dog Handler:

- In 1990, civil rights protection was given to people with disabilities when the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed. The ADA protects the rights of people with disabilities to participate in the same activities each day as people without disabilities. **Warning:** It is a Federal crime to make materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements, entries, or representations knowingly and willfully to secure disability accommodations provided under regulations of the United States Department of Transportation (18 U.S.C. § 1001). A service dog is chosen as a medical device that allows for FUNctional independence each day. Many look at a Service Dog Team and say, "I want to take my dog everywhere too" without understanding that it is because of a life alternating injury, disease, or debilitating diagnosis that has taken place prior to stepping into a service dog team. **MSD-WCP will report fraudulent untrained service dogs because they put working service dog teams in harm's way.** Mobility Service Dogs-West Coast Project supports working service dog teams!
- Please be aware that the handler and the person with the disability may not be the same. However, the person with the disability must be present for the handler with the dog to have access.
- A service dog disrupting business activities due to poor behavior may be asked to leave the premises. The handler should be asked if he/she would like to continue without the dog being present.
- Service dogs must be allowed to accompany their handlers to and through self-service food lines. Similarly, service animals may not be prohibited from communal food preparation areas, commonly found in shelters or dormitories.
- In the school (K-12) context and similar settings, the school or similar entity may need to provide some assistance to enable a particular student to handle his/her service dog.



- Some individuals and organizations sell service animal certifications or registration documents online. These documents do **not** convey any rights under the ADA, and the Department of Justice (DOJ) does **not** recognize them as proof that the dog is a service dog.
- Many states have laws regarding access for persons with disabilities who utilize service animals. The U.S. DOJ recognizes whichever direction (State or Federal) is more lenient for the person's side with the disability.
- Service dogs with their handler have extensive training that takes 18-24 months to complete that include obedience, socialization, public access and task training. The handler must have a disability and the dog must be trained to perform tasks to help mitigate the disability. Service Dog Teams are allowed to go anywhere that the general public is allowed to go. They have full access rights under ADA Laws.
- When asked what task the dog performs, you need to be prepared to answer this question with specifics such as, "I use my service dog for bracing." Or "...counter-balance." OR... Reminder: A mobility dog is not a task.
- Access is for the person, not the service dog. Businesses restricting Handlers with service dogs can be directly reported to the DOJ. While there is no direct way to report a business to the DOJ, the best solution is to educate business owners about how to tell the difference and approach the owners with kindness. MSD-WCP does this sort of education.
- A service dog and handler team can legitimately be refused access to private clubs and churches. However, when these locations are opened for a public event, they are considered eligible for public access. (Example: a wedding at a church or a concert at a private club that includes the public- both are open to handlers and service dogs.)
- At public swimming pools, service dogs are permitted in the swimming area but not in the swimming pool. Private swimming pools can make up their own rules regarding service animals' access.
- Hospitals and ambulances must allow handlers and service dogs to be present everywhere the general public is permitted to go. Service dogs are not allowed in areas in hospitals that require special gear or procedures for humans to enter- such as surgical gowns, hair nets, double scrubbing hands for surgery or ICU units etc. Ambulances must take the service dog with the handler unless it is contra-indicated for the handler's care.
- Cruise lines do not encourage service dogs on board, because of seasickness and small spaces. We suggest that handlers travel on a cruise ship using other mobility tools and leave their service dog at home. However, service dogs are legally allowed, and you may bring yours with you, if you insist.
- Dogs whose sole function is to provide emotional support, comfort, therapy, companionship, therapeutic benefits, or promote emotional well-being DO NOT qualify for public access under the ADA and must travel as pets.



- Because people are trying to pass their dogs as service dogs, many states now give violations for fake service dogs.
- Therapy animals with their handlers/owner are professionally trained to perform animal-assisted interactions to provide comfort and assistance to clients in approved hospitals, nursing homes, schools, prisons, libraries, care homes, and airports. They do not have full rights of public access.