



## Legal Guidelines for Service Animals in NC

A service animal is a specially trained dog or miniature horse that helps a person with a disability. They are protected by the American with Disabilities Act, a law which protects people with disabilities from discrimination. Here are some important things to know about service animals:

- A service animal must be a dog or miniature horse that is individually trained to help a person with a disability. The tasks it performs must directly relate to the person's disability. Other types of assistance animals, such as emotional support animals, are NOT service animals, and they do not necessarily enjoy the protections discussed in this resource.
- Service animals don't need identification cards or vests, don't have to complete specific training programs, and can be trained by anyone to assist with tasks related to a person's disability.
- There are no restrictions on the size or breed of service dogs; however, service horses must be miniature-sized.
- Service animals are allowed to go to public places. This includes government buildings, businesses, and places that offer services to the public like stores, hotels, theaters, restaurants, and medical facilities. Typically, service animals are allowed anywhere their handler is allowed.

When a person with a service animal enters a business, and the person using the service animal has a disability, the business is allowed to ask only two questions:

- Is the animal needed because of a disability?
- What tasks or skills is the animal trained to perform?

The business cannot ask about the person's disability, demand proof of the animal's training, or request that the service animal demonstrate the tasks it has been trained to perform.

A service animal may be excluded from a business if there is a valid reason to believe that a specific service animal will be aggressive or unpredictable, or if the service animal is not housetrained.

In North Carolina, service animals in training have the same rights as fully trained service animals. They must wear a collar, leash, and an identifying harness or cape that indicates they are in training. The trainer is responsible for any damage caused by the animal while in a business.