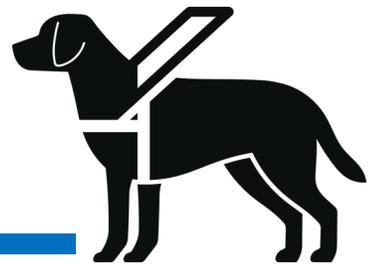


Policy & Guidance for Veterans & Staff on Service Animals



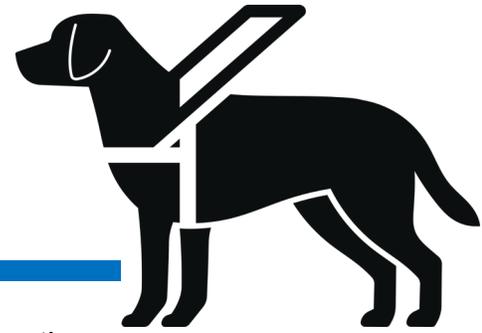
VA Puget Sound seeks to serve Veterans in a clean and therapeutic environment. **Service animals are permitted, whereas pets are not permitted on the premises of VA Puget Sound.** Owner/handler whose animal disrupts facility operations or the provision of health care to Veterans, **may be subject to removal, citation and/or fine** under federal law (38 CFR 1.218) issued by the VA Police.

Important Note: Washington State has adopted its own laws under the Revised Code of Washington that apply to misrepresentation of a service animal that could be **subject to fines** off VA Controlled property (RCW 7.80.120).

Service Animal Requirements:

1. Verifiable Service Animals (dogs only) are permitted to assist Veterans with disabilities.
2. The only service dogs recognized by VA include:
 - a) Mobility dogs (for transfers, opening doors and mobility assistance)
 - b) Mobility dogs for visually impaired
 - c) Seizure alert dogs
 - d) Hearing dogs
 - e) PTSD dogs (for protection barrier, anxiety or sleep management)
3. Dogs whose sole function is to provide emotional support, well being, comfort or companionship are not considered service animals by VHA and are not permitted access per VA regulation.
4. Service animals are not allowed in the following areas: operating rooms, dental suites, marrow transplant unit, oncology, and inpatient mental health. Service animals may also be denied entry in areas with identified infection control restrictions (e.g. oncology ward).
5. The owner/handler or alternate is responsible for control or care of the service animal at all times. VA is not responsible for the service animal while it is on VA property.
6. If the service animal presents a threat to the health or safety of other persons, the service animals must be removed from the facility and not allowed to return.
7. The owner/handler or alternate will be asked to remove the service animal from the facility if it causes a disruption of health care services or is a threat to patients or staff. Examples of disruptive behavior include: an animal relieving itself inside a facility building, barking, growling, biting, or lunging.
8. The owner/handler should be prepared to share contact information for an alternate handler / emergency contact for care of their service animal in the event they are unable to care for their service animal. If an alternate handler is not available and the Veteran will need care in a restricted area:
 - a) The Veteran will be provided alternative care options, or
 - b) The Veteran may opt to not receive treatment, or
 - c) Alternative arrangements may be required to care for the service animal at a kennel or shelter for animals. Expenses for this care will be the responsibility of the owner/handler.

Policy & Guidance for Veterans & Staff on Service Animals



Staff and Patient Guidance:

9. Staff are permitted to ask and Veterans must be able to respond to 2 questions:
 - a) What is the purpose of the service animal?
 - b) What tasks is their service animal trained to perform?
10. Staff are not permitted to care for service animals or pets for any Veteran. Staff cannot take control of the service animal, cannot take the service animal to a kennel or boarding facility, and cannot attempt to board the service animal themselves on or off VHA property.
11. Questions related to this guidance & facility policy, *RI-014 Animals Brought into VA Puget Sound Health Care System*, should be directed to the facility-level workgroup: PugServiceAnimal@va.gov.
12. **Concerns regarding the behavior of a service animal and/or handler, will be reported to VA Police**, and through the Joint Patient Safety Reporting System (JPSR).
13. Given that service animals are not allowed certain areas including: operating rooms, dental suites, marrow transplant unit, oncology, and inpatient mental health. VA Puget Sound staff respectfully requests contact information for an Alternate Handler or Emergency Contact for your animal:

Name of Veteran: _____

Name of Service Animal: _____

Breed of Service Animal: _____

Name of Alternate Handler/Emergency Contact: _____

Relationship to Veteran: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Name of Veterinarian Clinic: _____

Phone of Veterinarian Clinic: _____

Special Needs of Animal or other notes: _____

VA Staff should enter the information above into CPRS, as an addendum to an Advance Directive progress note and/or under emergency contact information.