Service Animals in Food Establishments

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A service animal is a dog trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. The animal assists and accompanies its owner in daily life. You must allow service animals in your establishment, but you can ask the owner to exclude them if they are out of control.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact FoodLodgining@vermont.gov.

How to Identify a Service Animal



- It may not be obvious whether a dog is a service animal since they are not required to wear a specific vest or collar.
- Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), you may **not ask** for documentation, demonstrations of tasks or services, or about the owner's disability. You **can ask** these two questions:
    1. Is the service animal required because of a disability?
    2. What tasks or services is the dog trained to perform?
- Keep in mind that these questions may make the owner feel uncomfortable even if the dog is a service animal.

What Service Animals Are Allowed to Do



- Service animals can accompany their handlers anywhere customers are allowed. This includes indoor or outdoor seating and restrooms.
- Staff may have their own service animals with them at work, but they are not allowed in specific areas like kitchens and food preparation zones.
- Staff and customers should never feed, pet or distract a service animal.
- Service dogs must remain seated on the floor, ideally tucked under a booth or table. They may also sit on the handler's lap. Sitting on chairs, booths or tables is **not** allowed.
- Some service dogs need to be off-leash to perform their tasks.

What Service Animals Are Not Allowed to Do



Restaurants in Vermont have the right to ask the owner to exclude their service animal if the animal:

- Barks, jumps on others or begs for food.
- Is on top of tables, bar counters or chairs.
- Has an accident inside the food service establishment.
- Shows aggression or poses a direct health hazard.

Frequently Asked Questions

What kinds of tasks or work do service animals generally do?

- Alert others when a diabetic person experiences extremely high or low blood sugar.
- Physical tasks like opening doors, retrieving objects, pulling a wheelchair, guiding a person with visual impairments or using light switches.
- Alert their owner before they experience psychiatric distress, like an anxiety attack or post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms.

Does a service animal need professional training?

- No. People with disabilities can train their own service animal.

Does it matter if the service animal is still in training?

- Vermont law requires public establishments to treat service animals in training the same as fully trained service animals.

What is an emotional support animal?

- An emotional support animal is a pet that helps its owner feel calmer, safer or more comfortable just by being there.
- They do not perform specific trained tasks for their owners like service animals do.
- Emotional support animals are treated like pets in food service establishments and do not have the same protections as service animals.

More Information

- Frequently Asked Questions about Service Animals and the ADA (ADA)
- Vermont Health Regulations for Food Service Establishments