

Service Animal Guidelines

Ohio Wesleyan University (OWU) is committed to providing accommodations to students with disabilities who require equal access to space on campus. OWU follows the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the most up to date guidance from the Department of Justice (DOJ) with regard to service animals on campus. The following are responsibilities for persons with disabilities who bring service animals to campus and the responsibilities of OWU, in accordance with the ADA and the DOJ.

Definitions

Service Animal: Service animals are defined as dogs (or in some instances, miniature horses) that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

Handler: A person/student with a disability who is directly served by a service animal or a personal care attendant who handles the animal for a person/student with a disability.

Handler Responsibilities

- Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents use of these devices. In this case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
- A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises unless: (1) the dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it or (2) the dog is not housebroken. Some but not all service animals wear special collars and harnesses. Some, but not all, are licensed or certified and have identification papers.
- The handler is responsible for the actions of the service animal, including bodily injury and/or property damage caused by the service animal, and must take appropriate precautions to prevent damage to property or personal injury. In the event of property damage (excluding normal maintenance) to a student room or common area, the handler will be financially responsible for repairs or replacement of damaged items. Damages may include the cost of cleaning carpets and furniture and removing animal odors, dander, hair, etc. Charges will appear on the handler's OWU student account.
- The cost of care (health and safety) for the service animal is the sole responsibility of the handler. The service animal is required to be in compliance with all local ordinances regarding vaccinations and proper licensure. Up to date vaccination records for services animals will be provided to Ohio Wesleyan University by the handler.

- The handler is to ensure that the service animal is not disruptive or a nuisance to members of the OWU community. Disruptive behavior includes loud barking or other distracting actions by the service animal not part of the necessary service to the handler unless said noises or behaviors are part of the needed service to the handler. A nuisance is defined as, but not limited to, excessive noise, physical harm to humans or other animals, and destruction of property. To the extent possible, the handler should ensure the service dog does not approach or sniff people, dining tables, or the personal belongings of others.
- The handler must take precautions to assure the service dog does not block any emergency exits.
- Service animals must be housebroken. Waste cleanup is the responsibility of the handler. If the handler is not physically able to clean up after the service dog then the handler must hire and pay someone who is physically able to perform this service. Animal waste should be immediately retrieved by the handler, placed in a plastic bag and securely tied before being disposed of in outside trash dumpsters. The handler should keep the animal from urinating in gardens or cultivated areas of the campus.
- If the service dog resides in university housing, the handler should provide the Accessibility Services Office with emergency contact information of another adult who can care for the service animal if the handler is unable to care for the service animal. A current OWU student or OWU personnel are not appropriate choices for an emergency contact. If a service animal resides in University housing, the Accessibility Services Office will share a copy of the emergency contact information with the Residential Life Office.
- A student who requires the use of a service animal and resides on campus should choose roommate(s) and/or suitemate(s) who are comfortable residing with the animal. If irreconcilable differences exist between the student who requires the use of a service animal and roommate(s) and/or suitemate(s), the Residential Life Office will work directly with all parties to find suitable alternative housing arrangements.
- The service animal cannot pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others. If the service animal is deemed to pose a physical threat to others (students, faculty, staff, the public), actions will be taken to remove it from university property.
- If any animal neglect is suspected, the university will contact the resident and local authorities. The service animal should not be left alone for unreasonably long periods of time.
- Routine care for the service animal is expected for health and safety reasons, and includes flea and tick prevention, de-worming, routine vaccinations, bathing, and annual examinations

OWU Responsibilities

Students who utilize a Service Animal do not have to officially register with the Accessibility Services Office.

Ohio Wesleyan University cannot ask about the nature of a person's disability to determine if the animal qualifies as a Service Animal.

State and local governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations that serve the public generally must allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of the facility where the public is normally allowed to go.

When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Faculty/ Staff may ask two questions: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform. Staff cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task. Although a number of states have programs to certify service animals, you may not insist on proof of state certification before permitting the service animal to accompany the person with a disability.

If it is unclear that an animal is a Service Animal, the student may be directed to the Accessibility Services Office to assist in the determination of whether an accommodation needs to be made, and/or if the animal is indeed a Service Animal.

When there is a legitimate reason to ask that a service animal be removed, staff must offer the person with the disability the opportunity to obtain goods or services without the animal's presence.

Service Animals, Handlers, and the Law

- www.ada.gov
- www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm.