

Service Dog Etiquette

- Do not touch the dog without permission from the human partner.
- Do not distract the dog with noises, food, or attempts to pet.
- Talk to the person, not the dog.
- Do not ask the person what their disability is.
- Compliments about a service dog are usually welcome!
- Do not be offended if the partner doesn't want to chat about their service dog or disability.
- If you have a dog, don't let it approach, play with, or bark at a service dog.
- Tell partners that might be visually impaired where your dog is in relation to them.



Psychiatric Service Dog Partners

1651 Sandpiper Drive
Rock Hill, SC 29732

www.psychdogpartners.org
veronica.m.psdp@gmail.com
(510) 367-4267

Department of Justice ADA line

www.ada.gov
(800) 514-0301

More videos and printed materials

[www.calodging.com/resources/
member-services/service-animal-
guidelines/](http://www.calodging.com/resources/member-services/service-animal-guidelines/)



© 2015 PSDP

Answers to Common Questions about Psychiatric Service Dogs



Psychiatric Service Dog Partners' purpose is to promote the mental health of people using service dogs for psychiatric disabilities by educating, advocating, providing expertise, facilitating peer support, and promoting responsible service dog training and handling.

Q: What is a psychiatric service dog?

A: A dog of any breed or size, trained specifically to do work or tasks to assist with a person's mental health disability, and prepared to behave in public.

Q: What is a disability?

A: It is a physical or mental condition that severely limits a major life activity—the disability isn't always visible!

Q: How can PSDs help?

A: PSDs can be trained to do a variety of work and tasks to suit the individual needs of the disabled partner. Tasks are intentionally requested by the handler, such as turning on the lights or doing a non-aggressive room sweep. Work is not intentionally requested by the handler, but is available when the dog is cued by the environment or changes in the person's body. One example of work includes alerting to an oncoming panic attack so the handler can take rescue meds or exit the situation. Another work example includes hallucination discernment, where the PSD is trained to non-aggressively react to cues in the environment so the handler can know when what they see is real or a hallucination. Sometimes the line



between work and tasks isn't clear, but what's important is the person gets needed help. Some dogs can be trained to guide the handler to a safe location on command (guiding can require independent reactions to the outside world), which can help a person who sometimes becomes cognitively impaired and has difficulty navigating. The types of assistance are as varied as the people who need them!

Q: Who trains PSDs?

A: They can be trained by the disabled partner or professional trainers. Training takes 1–2 years. For owner-trainers, we recommend the assistance of a trainer.

Q: Are they allowed in stores?

A: Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service dogs are allowed anywhere the public is. This includes restaurants, hospitals, stores, movies, hotels, public transit, and taxis.

Q: What identification is required?

A: According to the ADA, one can ask if the service dog is assisting with a person's disability, and what the dog does to assist. Partners cannot be asked to disclose their disability. ID, vests, or certification are not required.

Q: What about allergies/fears of dogs?

A: These are not valid reasons for denying a service dog team. If the allergy or fear is disabling, both people must be accommodated. Usually the two parties stay away from each other.

Q: What if a service dog barks?

A: First, ask if the handler needs assistance. The dog might be alerting to a medical condition, it might have been stepped on, or it might be a young puppy learning manners. If the barking is



disruptive and continues, the business can—and often should—legally ask for the dog's removal.

Q: Can I get a vest for my pet?

A: Service dogs are not pets! They must be trained to mitigate the partner's disability and to behave stably in public. Calling a dog that does not meet these requirements a service dog is offensive and illegal. Therapy dogs that visit hospitals, help kids read, etc., do not have the same rights as service dogs.

Q: Do PSDs get to “just be dogs”?

A: Yes! When off-duty, PSDs act like regular dogs. Many also enjoy sports, playing fetch, and other activities.

Q: How do I get a PSD?

A: We can help! Contact us to join our free online support group and to learn our recommended steps to obtain and train a PSD prospect.

Q: Can I help service dog teams?

A: If a service dog team is denied access, speak up for them if they need it. Share service dog etiquette with others. Consider donating to PSDP, or visit our website to get involved in service dog advocacy!