



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
NAVY MEDICINE READINESS AND TRAINING COMMAND TWENTYNINE PALMS
BOX 788250
TWENTYNINE PALMS CA 92278-8250

IN REPLY REFER TO:
29 Oct 2020

COMMANDING OFFICER'S POLICY STATEMENT
Guidelines for Service Animals

This policy is in place to establish and clarify legal obligations and etiquette guidelines when interacting with an individual using a service animal, with a particular emphasis on the healthcare setting. Service animals serve as an adjunct to traditional medical, nursing, and physiological interventions to help facilitate the health and well-being of patients, families and staff. Conceptually, it may be helpful to substitute the term "assistive device" for "service animal" in thinking through the issues.

The definition of service animals are animals 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 a 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. A service animal whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, healthcare facilities must permit the use of a service animal by a person with a disability, including during a public health emergency or disaster.

Service animals are to accompany the individual with a disability in all areas of the Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) where healthcare personnel, visitors, and patients are normally allowed during inpatient services, unless the animal's presence or behavior creates a fundamental alteration in the nature of a MTF's services in a particular area or a direct threat to other persons in a particular area. It may be appropriate to exclude a service animal from limited access areas that employ general infection control measures, such as operating rooms and burn units, where the animal's presence may compromise a sterile field environment.

Allergies and fear of animals are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service animals. When a person who is allergic to animal dander and a person who uses a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room or different rooms in the facility. People with disabilities who use service animals may not be isolated from others, treated less favorably than others, or charged with fees.

Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or if an individual's disability prevents using these devices. The handler/owner must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls. When encountering an individual with a service animal, do not interact with or distract the animal. Staff are not required to provide care or food for a service animal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. M. Boamah", is positioned above the printed name.

L. M. BOAMAH