



WELCOMING **Service Animals** TO THE CITY OF VAUGHAN

Service Animals Save Lives



Service animals are important because they can save lives and improve the quality of life for people with disabilities by performing specific functions and services to assist the individual. That includes guide dogs for people who are blind or partially sighted, cats to aid people living with anxiety and rats trained to be alert to muscle spasms. Welcoming service animals is an important part of being inclusive to all residents.

What can you do to support people with service animals?

- Put the person first – the animal won't mind.
- Assume independence. The service animal and the handler are one independent unit. The handler knows best how to handle their animal. If you think someone could use some help, ask how you can help before stepping in.

- Recognize that people can bring their service animals to any public space.
- Don't distract service animals. Help service animals do a good job by saving snacks and cuddles for your pets at home.

IDENTIFYING A SERVICE ANIMAL

It is not always obvious an animal is a service animal. Some disabilities are non-visible and not all animals wear a special harness or vest that identifies them as a service animal. If you have a service animal that does not wear a noticeable vest or harness, you may be asked to show identification that the animal is needed for reasons of a disability. Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, businesses and organizations can ask for documentation from a regulated health professional stating you need your animal because of a disability.



If there is a conflict on City property between a customer with a service animal and another customer, the City of Vaughan will work with all customers to ensure everyone has access to City services and facilities.

SERVICE ANIMALS WORK: DON'T DISTRACT OR INTERACT

The following has been adapted with permission from Guide Dogs for the Blind. Visit their website at guidedogs.com.

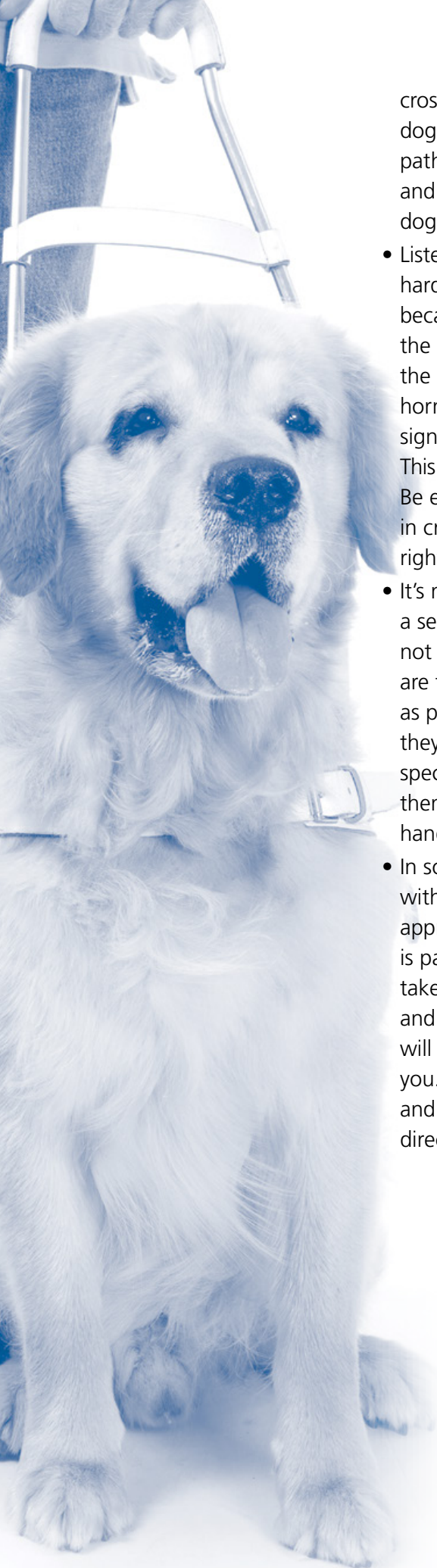
These tips can help you know what to do when you notice guide dogs or other service animals in the community.

- When you notice someone using a guide dog, it may be tempting to pet it. Remember, this dog is responsible for specific tasks to assist their handler. The dog should never be distracted from that job. A person's safety may depend on their dog's alertness and concentration. The animal's primary responsibility is to its partner or handler, and it is important that the animal not expect attention from others.
- Do not offer food or treats. Service animals are fed on a schedule and follow a specific diet to keep them in optimum condition. Even slight changes from their routine can disrupt their regular eating and relieving schedules, and seriously inconvenience their handlers. Service animals are trained to resist offers of food so they can visit restaurants without begging. Feeding treats to a guide dog weakens this training.
- Although guide dogs cannot read traffic signals, they are responsible for helping their handlers safely

Acceptable Regulated Health Professionals

People with service animals may produce documentation from a member of the:

- College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario
- College of Chiropractors of Ontario
- College of Nurses of Ontario
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
- College of Optometrists of Ontario
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario
- College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
- College of Psychologists of Ontario
- College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario



cross a street. Calling out to a guide dog or intentionally obstructing its path can be dangerous for the dog and its handler as it could break the dog's concentration on its work.

- Listening for traffic flow has become harder for guide dog handlers because of quieter car engines and the increasing number of cars on the road. Please don't honk your horn or call out from your car to signal when it is safe to cross. This can be distracting and confusing. Be especially careful of pedestrians in crosswalks when making right-hand turns at red lights.
- It's not all work and no play for a service animal. When they are not in a harness or on duty, they are treated in much the same way as pets. However, for their safety, they are only allowed to play with specific toys. Please don't offer them toys without first asking their handler's permission.
- In some situations, working with a service animal may not be appropriate. Instead, someone who is partially sighted may prefer to take your arm just above the elbow and allow their dog to heel. Others will prefer to have their dog follow you. In this case, talk to the handler and not the dog when giving directions for turns.

- A service animal can make mistakes and will need reminders to maintain its training. Correcting a mistake usually involves a time-out or leash action. When the animal regains focus and correctly follows a cue, they are frequently praised and rewarded with a kibble. Service animal handlers have been taught appropriate management methods to use with their animals.
- Access laws, including the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, permit individuals to be accompanied by their guide dogs anywhere the general public is allowed, including taxis and buses, restaurants, theatres, stores, schools, hotels, apartment and office buildings.
- The Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* also allows any person living with a disability to be accompanied by their service animal wherever the public is allowed, unless excluded by another law.
- The Food Premises Regulation under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* allows service dogs in areas where food is served, offered for sale or sold. This means service dogs are allowed in restaurants and grocery stores.
- Before asking a question of a person handling a service animal, allow them to complete the task at hand.
- Remain calm in your approach and mannerisms.
- Never tease an animal.

Frequently Asked Questions for Businesses Regarding Access for Service Animals

PLEASE NOTE: *The following is not legal advice. For more information, consult the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the Health Protection and Promotion Act or seek legal advice.*



Q What are the laws that apply to my business?

Under the Ontario Human Rights Code, privately owned businesses that serve the public, such as restaurants, hotels, retail stores, taxicabs, theatres, concert halls, and sports facilities, are prohibited from discriminating against individuals living with disabilities.

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* requires these businesses to allow people living with disabilities to bring their service animals onto business premises in whatever areas customers are generally allowed.

These laws do not apply to service animals in training or therapy animals (animals that assist people that are not their handlers, such as dogs that visit long-term care residences).



Q How can I tell if an animal is really a service animal and not just a pet?

Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars and harnesses. Some, but not all, are licensed or certified and have identification papers. Sometimes, but not always, it is obvious that a person with the service animal has a disability. However, because not all disabilities are visible, and not all service animals wear a harness or have identification papers, it can be difficult to know if an animal is a service animal.

If you are not certain that an animal is a service animal, you may ask the person who has the animal if it is a service animal required because of a disability. It is important to remember you cannot ask someone if they have a disability or about the nature of their disability. Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, if it is not readily apparent (you cannot tell if the person has a disability or that the animal is a service animal), people with service animals can be asked to show documentation from a regulated health professional stating that the animal is a service animal and needed for reasons of a disability.

Q What is a service animal?

A service animal is any guide dog, signal dog or other animal that is individually trained to aid a person with a disability. Animals may be considered service animals regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a school or training facility. Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks to aid the individual with a disability. Guide dogs are one type of service animal used by some people who have vision loss. This is the type of service animal with which most people are familiar. But there are service animals that assist persons with other kinds of disabilities in their day-to-day activities. Some examples include:

- Alerting people who are hearing impaired to sounds
- Pulling wheelchairs or carrying and picking up things for persons with limited mobility
- Assisting persons with limited mobility with balance
- Detecting and alerting people to oncoming seizures
- Providing comfort and emotional support

Q What must I do when an individual with a service animal comes to my business?

The service animal must be permitted to accompany the individual with a disability to all areas of the facility where customers are normally allowed to go. An individual with a service animal may not be segregated from other customers or from their service animal.

Q I have always had a clearly posted “no pets” policy at my establishment. Do I still have to allow service animals?

Yes. A service animal is not a pet. This does not mean you must abandon your “no pets” policy altogether, but that you must make an exception to your general rule to allow service animals.

Q Am I responsible for the animal while the person with a disability is in my business?

The care or supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of their owner.

You are not required to provide care or food or a special location for the animal.

If you have questions about service animals or the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, you may contact the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario at accesson.ca or 1-866-515-2025 (telephone) or 1-800-268-7095 (TTY).

Other Resources

Service animals are not regulated, and so there is no single place for information on service animals. Contact local organizations in your area that work with people with disabilities. They may have information about service animals. You may want to start your research with some of the following agencies:

- Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB): cnib.ca
- Canadian Hearing Services (CHS): chs.ca
- National Service Dogs: nsd.on.ca

To request this information in another format, email animal.services@vaughan.ca or call 905-832-2281. For more information, visit vaughan.ca/AnimalServices.

This resource has been adapted with permission from the Region of Waterloo.





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