

Etiquette for Service Animal Team Interaction

Updated August 30, 2016

Disability Support Services (DSS) would like to share information and guidelines with the Cal Lutheran community for interacting with service animals.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform task for people with disabilities.¹ Emotional Support Animals are often used as part of a medical treatment plan as therapy animals and are different than service animals.² The rights of an individual with a disability to a service or emotional support animals depends on the type of animal, the function that the animal performs, and the setting in which the right is asserted.³ Keep in mind that these animals are working animals, not pets.

Below are guidelines to follow when encountering a service animal team and note that the handlers have been taught the appropriate handling and correction methods to use with their animal.

- Service animals typically wear a leather harness, scarf or sign to indicate they are working animals. Even if the animal does not appear to be working, perhaps the animal is lying still or simply sitting, the presence of the harness means the animal is still on duty and should not be distracted. Best practice is to ignore the service animal when it is wearing its harness.
- Allow a service animal to accompany the partner at all times and everywhere on campus except where they are specifically prohibited.
- Do not deliberately startle a service animal.
- Do not pet, speak to, or try to catch the attention of a service animal. Doing these things when the animal is working distracts the animal from the task at hand. You may ask the animal's owner for permission to interact with the service animal.
- Do not attempt to separate a partner/handler from his or her service animal.
- If a service animal team looks as though they may need assistance, ask. If they are about to encounter a dangerous situation, voice your concerns in a calm and clear manner and avoid grabbing the service animal, harness, or the handler.
- Do not feed a service animal. The service animal may have specific dietary requirements.
- If you are on campus with an animal of your own, please control your animal so it will not distract a working animal from his/her job. The best way to accomplish this is to keep at a distance from the working animal.
- If you are on a bicycle, skateboard, or other moving device, the best rule of thumb when passing a service animal team is to pass on the handler's side to lessen the chance of startling the service animal.
- It is not all work and no play for service animals. When they are not in harness, they are treated in much the same way as pets. However, for their safety they are only allowed to play with specific toys. Ask the handler's permission before offering a toy to a service animal.

Feel free to contact DSS at 805-493-3464 or dss@callutheran.edu if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your cooperation!

¹ https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

² https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_ga.html

³ <http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/pubs/548301.pdf>