

Service & Emotional Support Animals Guidance

Planning Guide for Local Governments

Management of Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals in Isolation Locations for People Diagnosed with COVID-19



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Purpose of this Guidance

The purpose of this guidance is to assist local governments in establishing best practices standards for people who are ill with COVID-19 and depend on a service animal or emotional support animal. The guide outlines the legal definitions, patient responsibilities, safety and support and, potential funding resources.

NOTE: The Washington State Department of Health recognizes that each region of the state and each community is unique – with different strengths, available resources, vulnerabilities, challenges, and needs. Local jurisdictions are both empowered and responsible for their planning. Considerations in this document are not directives and are not legally binding but are informed by best practices and offered to support local health jurisdictions and Tribal governments in their planning.

This document will be periodically updated to keep current as knowledge grows and needs change. Questions and feedback from local jurisdictions, tribes, and other public health partners are welcome and valued. Please email DOH-Medsurge@doh.wa.gov to share thoughts or request a call to discuss further, or request technical assistance in managing service and emotional support animals in isolation locations.

Definition: Service Animal

Per ADA a service animal is defined by TITLE II* and TITLE III**:

A service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.

Tasks performed can include, among other things, pulling a wheelchair, retrieving dropped items, alerting a person to a sound, reminding a person to take medication, or pressing an elevator button.

Examples:

- **Guide Dog or Seeing Eye® Dog** is a carefully trained dog that serves as a travel tool for persons who have severe visual impairments or are blind.
- **A Hearing or Signal Dog** is a dog that has been trained to alert a person who has a significant hearing loss or is deaf when a sound occurs, such as a knock on the door.
- **Psychiatric Service Dog** is a dog that has been trained to perform tasks that assist individuals with disabilities to detect the onset of psychiatric episodes and lessen their effects. Tasks performed by psychiatric service animals may include reminding the handler to take medicine, providing safety checks or room searches, or turning on lights for persons with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), interrupting self-mutilation by persons with dissociative identity disorders, and keeping disoriented individuals from danger.
- **SSigDOG** (Sensory Signal Dogs or Social Signal Dog) is a dog trained to assist a person with autism. The dog alerts the handler to distracting repetitive movement (e.g. hand flapping.)
- **Seizure Response Dog** is a dog trained to assist a person with a seizure disorder. How the dog serves the person depends on the person's needs. The dog may go for help. A few dogs have learned to predict a seizure and alert the person to sit down or move to a safe place.

*** Title II Definition:**

Title II of the ADA prevents local public organizations from discriminating against people with disabilities. This means organizations like the local school system, hospitals, clinics, public transportation system, public housing, and other city and state government buildings.

**** Title III Definition:**

Title III of the ADA focuses on private businesses, such as hotels, restaurants, theatres, grocery stores, and hardware stores.

Patient's Rights (Handler's Rights)

Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) makes it clear that service animals are allowed in public facilities and accommodations. A service animal must be allowed to accompany the handler to any place in the building or facility where members of the public, program participants, customers, or patients are allowed. Even if the facility or public program has a "no pets" policy, it may not deny entry to a person with a service animal. Service animals are not pets. So, although a "no pets" policy is perfectly legal, it does not allow a facility or business to exclude service animals.

When a person with a service animal enters a public facility or place of public accommodation, the person cannot be asked about the nature or extent of his disability. Only two questions may be asked:

1. Is the animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

These questions should not be asked, however, if the animal's service tasks are obvious. For example, the questions may not be asked if the dog is observed guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling a person's wheelchair, or aiding with stability or balance to an individual with an observable mobility disability.

A public facility is not allowed to ask for documentation or proof that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a service animal. Local laws that prohibit specific breeds of dogs do not apply to service animals.

Definition: Emotional Support Animal

An emotional support animal is a type of animal that provides comfort to help relieve a symptom or effect of a person's disability. Under U.S. law, an emotional support animal is not a pet and is generally not restricted by species. Certain COVID-19 I&Q facilities may be unable to accommodate certain species.

NOTE: Emotional Support Animals are NOT considered service animals by the ADA or Washington State Law and are not protected by the laws outlined for service animals. Admission of ESA's is left to the discretion of the I&Q facility manager.

Patient Responsibilities

Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals in the COVID-19 Isolation Locations

The patient is responsible for the supervision of the service animal or emotional support animal and may be asked to remove the animal if:

- The animal is out of control and the animal's owner does not take effective action to control it (e.g. a dog barking unabated and the owner does not correct or, is unable to correct the behavior).
- The animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of other animals and/or patients and staff. The operator of the Isolation Location does not have to allow the service animal or emotional support animal onto the premises if the patient is unwilling/unable to control the animal.
- The care and supervision of a service or emotional support animal is solely the responsibility of the patient which includes feeding, toileting, grooming, and veterinary care.

- The patient must keep the animal under physical control, on a leash, no greater than 8 (eight) feet in length, or otherwise physically restrained, at all times during the stay at the I&Q facility, especially during the daily patient evaluation
- The patient must ensure that the animal is restrained to allow a health care professional to approach and perform a daily assessment without interference.

Required Documentation

- **Rabies Vaccination:** Patients entering the I&Q facility with a service or emotional support animal are required to present a valid rabies vaccine certificate. Per Washington State Rule WAC 216-100-197, all dogs, cats, and ferrets in Washington State must have up-to-date rabies vaccines. The owner of a dog, cat, or ferret shall have it vaccinated against rabies and re-vaccinated following veterinary and vaccine manufacturer instructions. An “owner” is any person legally responsible for the care and actions of a service and/or emotional support animal.
- **Pet License: Most jurisdictions in Washington State require pet licenses.** Patients entering the I&Q facility with a service or emotional support animal are required to present a current dog license/registration.
- **ESA Letter:** An Emotional Support Animal letter is a legal document that distinguishes an emotional support animal (ESA) from a regular house pet. This letter is proof that a patient has an emotional and/or mental disability, and that the ESA is part of the treatment of that disability.

NOTE: Only a state-licensed mental health professional (LMHP) can issue an ESA letter.

Health Concerns

Housing service and emotional support animals with the patient in the same space, may be necessary but, can present challenges:

- Patients who may have animal-related allergies or phobias.
- The animal is not housetrained.
- Transmission of common dog diseases (tapeworms, giardia, scabies, etc.)

A separated space might be adequate to avoid allergic reactions. If a patient is at risk of a significant allergic reaction to an animal, it is the responsibility of the facility manager or government entity to find a way to accommodate both the patient using the service animal and the patient with the allergy.

Emergency Situations

The patient is responsible to plan for someone else to care for the animal in case of an emergency. If that is not possible, the operator of the I&Q location can arrange boarding at a nearby facility until the patient is well enough to make other arrangements. The patient is responsible for the cost of boarding the service animal or emotional support animal. Local Humane Societies or animal shelters may be able to provide temporary emergency boarding.

Homeless Patients with Dogs – Special Considerations

Patients Accompanied by Dog without Vaccine Certification or License

For the safety of service and emotional support animals, patients, and staff members, I&Q facilities should refrain from accommodating patients with animals that are not vaccinated and/or licensed. Local Humane Societies or animal shelters may be able to care for the animal during the patient's stay at the I&Q, provided the patient is willing or able to separate from the dog.

Considerations for homeless patients who refuse to stay at the I&Q facility without their dog. The following options may provide safe isolation or quarantine solutions for homeless patients who can care for themselves and their dogs:

- Tents on the facility's premises. Allow patients, who require quarantine or isolation, to set up their own or facility-provided tents.
- RV or travel trailers rentals.
- Patient-owned vehicle. Designate parking areas for homeless patients who prefer to isolate or quarantine in their vehicles.

NOTE: Homeless patients must adhere to patient responsibilities (see page 4.)

Household Pets

COVID-19 Isolation and Quarantine facilities are unable to accommodate household pets.

Household Pet Definition

A Household pet is a domestic animal ordinarily permitted in a place of residence, kept for company and pleasure, such as a dog, cat, domestic bird, guinea pig, white rat, rabbits, mice and other similar animals generally considered by the public to be kept as pet.

Patient Responsibilities

The patient is responsible to plan for someone else to care for the household pet during his or her isolation or quarantine period. All expenses for feeding, toileting, grooming, and veterinary care are the sole responsibility of the patient.

Household pets should be left in the care of qualified and trained staff in facilities equipped for boarding/sheltering animals. Contact the local Humane Society, local animal shelter, pet boarding facilities, or veterinary clinics. The patient is responsible for all boarding/sheltering service expenses.

Funding

Several potential federal, state, and local fund sources may be available to support tribal and local government temporary animal shelter and rescue programs. Funding source availability and requirements vary and are expected to evolve as resources and needs change. We encourage local communities to review available information online and reach out directly to each potential funder for additional information.

Purina Pet Food

Purina partners with organizations that help keep people and pets together in times of crisis to promoting pet welfare causes, sustainable practices, and sponsoring events that help bring people and pets together. Purina works to ensure our support makes a positive, meaningful difference.

<https://www.purina's Grants and Sponsorships | Purina>

ASPCA

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) offers a variety of emergency grants for animal shelters and rescue groups.

<https://www.ASPCA COVID-19 Information Hub | ASPCApro>

Maddie's Fund

Funds innovative solutions and creative thinking through inclusive and community-focused programs and projects for animal welfare.

[https://www.Grants Portal \(maddiesfund.org\)](https://www.Grants Portal (maddiesfund.org))

Banfield Foundation

The Banfield Foundation grant programs support animal welfare organizations working to provide veterinary care, shelter, and disaster relief to pets in need. Applicants must be nonprofit organizations with proof of 501(c)(3) status and running programs that deliver assistance to pets and their owners living in the United States.

<https://www.Banfield Foundation Programs - Veterinary Assistance Grants>

Cold Noses Foundation

The Cold Noses Foundation, Inc. Grant program can help organizations fund special projects relating to the humane treatment of animals, finding homes and non-lethal alternatives to euthanasia, veterinary care for needy families or organizations, and humane education.

<https://www.Grant Guidelines | Cold Noses Foundation>

Laura J. Niles Foundation, Inc.

The foundation has a particular interest in education, economic self-sufficiency, and programs that alleviate unhealthy dependencies. Concerning animals, most notably dogs, the foundation's areas of concentration center around canine health research, animal protection & adoption, search & rescue training, human assistance, and similar fields of interest.

[https://www.LAURA J. NILES FOUNDATION, INC. \(lauraniles.org\)](https://www.LAURA J. NILES FOUNDATION, INC. (lauraniles.org))

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CDC recommendations for Disaster Sheltering of Service Animals, Emotional Support Animals, and Household Pets.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/mass-animal-care.html#anchor_1596378393994

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Interim Guidance for Public Health Professionals Managing People With COVID-19 in Home Care and Isolation Who Have Pets or other Animals.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/animals/interim-guidance-managing-people-in-home-care-and-isolation-who-have-pets.html>

National Animal Rescue and Sheltering Coalition (NARSC)

National Animal Rescue and Sheltering Coalition (NARSC) in conjunction with the American Red Cross is providing guidance intended to ensure jurisdictions are aware of planning changes necessary to meet the extra burden during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[https://Microsoft Word - V1.1 Emergency Animal Sheltering during COVID-19 Guidance to Jurisdictions.docx \(filesusr.com\)](https://Microsoft Word - V1.1 Emergency Animal Sheltering during COVID-19 Guidance to Jurisdictions.docx (filesusr.com))

Washington State Emergency Management Division

Emergency preparedness information for I&Q managers and staff who seek assistance for service animals and their handlers in emergencies, such as pet food/feeding support and supplies, veterinary care, etc.

[Personal | Washington State Military Department, Citizens Serving Citizens with Pride & Tradition](#)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

[ADA 2010 Revised Requirements: Service Animals](#)

- **Frequently Asked Questions about Service Animals and the ADA**

This publication provides guidance on the ADA's service provisions and should be read in conjunction with the publication ADA Revised Requirements: Service Animals.

[service_animal_qa.pdf \(ada.gov\)](#)

Service Animal Guidance – for Emergency Shelter Managers and Workers

The Shelter Manager is encouraged to work with their county's County Animal Response Team (CART) for support regarding service animals and their handlers in the human shelters, such as for pet food/feeding support and supplies, veterinary care, and where to locate and configure the Animal Walk Area.

[Washington State Animal Response Team - Enumclaw, WA \(Address and Phone\) \(countyoffice.org\)](#)

Emotional Support Animals

Definition and Regulation: [Where Can I Go with My Emotional Support Animal? \(emotionalpetsupport.com\)](http://emotionalpetsupport.com)

Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Letters

Information about ESA letters; what must be included and who can issue them. [ESA Letter Sample – CertaPet](#)

Toolkit One Health Approach to Address Companion Animals with SARS-CoV-2

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/animals/toolkit.html>

Prepare your pets for emergencies

[Prepare Your Pets for Disasters | Ready.gov](#)

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More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. This is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share only accurate information to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions? Call our COVID-19 Information hotline: **1-800-525-0127**

Monday – 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday and [observed state holidays](#), 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact a health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.