

	Section 100 Administration		Policy & Procedure	
	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Service Animals</h2>		Number	100-32
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## Purpose

The Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) provides quality public safety services to all individuals regardless of age, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, parenthood, marital status, or physical or mental disability, and complies with all applicable local, state, and federal laws regarding discrimination.

This document establishes organizational procedures for AFD when employees interact with patients who request their service animal be transported with them in the ambulance and visitors who enter AFD facilities accompanied by their service animal in accordance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

## Policy

The ADA requires covered entities, like AFD, to generally allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas where the public is normally allowed to go. However, it may be appropriate to exclude a service animal under certain circumstances discussed in this policy. This policy provides the guidelines for interacting with service animals during AFD incident responses and when service animals accompany visitors to AFD facilities.

- A. **Service Animals with Patients:** Service animals may accompany patients in the back of an AFD ambulance if criteria as defined below can be reasonably met safely.
- B. **Service Animals with Visitors:** Service animals may accompany visitors within all AFD facilities open to the public provided they pose no threat to the health and safety of staff or other visitors within the facility and are within the control of the owner at all times.

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## **Procedure**

### **1.0 Definitions**

1.1 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as Amended by the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA):

1.1.1 Federal civil rights law which prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and governmental activities. It promotes the full inclusion of people with disabilities into every aspect of society.

1.2 Service Animal:

1.2.1 Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks directly related to a person's disability (miniature horses may also qualify as a service animal). Service dogs are working animals, not pets. Dogs or other animals whose sole function is to provide comfort, emotional support, therapy, or companionship do not qualify as a service animal under the ADA regulations.

1.2.2 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 mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, fetching a dropped item, or performing other duties.

1.2.3 Service dogs cannot be identified by appearance or size alone. Medium-sized dogs like retrievers or shepherds are most common. Extra-large dogs such as Great Danes and Rottweilers may be used for mobility assistance while small "lap" dogs can be used for medical alerting (e.g. seizures).

### **2.0 Identifying Service Animals**

2.1 When it is not obvious what service an animal provides (by vest or other identifying factors), inquiries are limited under the ADA. Personnel by law may ask only two questions:

**a. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?**

**b. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?**

2.2 AFD personnel cannot ask about the individual's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the animal, or ask that the animal demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

- 2.3 If the individual indicates the animal is a pet or comfort animal, or the individual cannot specify what task(s) the animal can perform, permitting transport to the hospital or access to an AFD facility is not required.
- 2.4 Allergies and fear of dogs or miniature horses are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service animals.

### **3.0 Transporting Patients with Service Animals**

- 3.1 Service animals must be under the control of their owner and be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In the latter case, the individual must maintain control of their animal through voice, signal, or other effective means of control.
- 3.2 A service animal shall be permitted to accompany a patient or guardian of a minor patient in the ambulance unless the presence of the service animal will disrupt patient care, the patient is unstable, the service animal is not under the control of the owner, or there is some basis for the attending personnel to believe the safety of the crew, the patient, or others would be compromised by the presence of the service animal in the ambulance.
  - 3.2.1 Growling may be considered threatening behavior. If a service animal is growling, the service animal may be transported by other means or left in the care of a responsible party. Barking may also be considered threatening, however, specific service animals are required to bark to alert and get their owner's attention. If the owner is incapacitated and cannot manage the service animal, request Dispatch notify the closest Battalion Chief to respond to location and assist.
- 3.3 When the presence of a service animal in the ambulance might interfere with patient care, jeopardize the safety of the crew, the patient or others, or cause damage to the ambulance or equipment, personnel should make other arrangements for transport of the service animal to the receiving hospital.
  - 3.3.1 Unless emergency conditions dictate otherwise, every effort must be made to reunite the patient with the service animal at the time of the patient's arrival at the hospital.
  - 3.3.2 Crews should request Dispatch to notify the closest Battalion Chief to respond to location if assistance is required to transport the service animal to the hospital. Law enforcement or animal control may also be requested to transport the service animal, but these resources may not be available or may have an extended response time.
- 3.4 When transporting a patient with a service animal, every effort should be made to do so in a safe manner for the crew members, the patient, and

the animal. If possible, the animal should be secured in some manner in order to prevent injury to the occupants and animal during transport.

- 3.4.1 If possible, the patient should be loaded into the vehicle first, and then load the service animal. Again if possible, reverse the order of unloading at the hospital. Also note open diamond plate gratings may injure the animal's paw(s).
- 3.5 The receiving hospital should be notified from location, or en route, that a service animal is in accompaniment so the facility can prepare for its arrival as well.
- 3.6 Personnel should document in the Patient Care Report (PCR) instances where the patient, or guardian accompanying a minor patient, utilize a service animal and note whether or not the service animal was transported with the patient.
  - 3.6.1 If the service animal is not transported to the hospital with the patient in the ambulance, the PCR must document the specific circumstances under which the decision was made. AFD personnel will make a reasonable effort to ensure the animal is safe, and is properly cared for. If the service animal is transported to the hospital by another means, the PCR shall document how the service animal was transported, with whom, and if known, document whether the service animal was reunited with the owner.
- 3.7 If AFD personnel respond to an incident with an injured service animal, AFD personnel should request Dispatch notify the closest Battalion Chief to respond to location if there is no other means of transportation available to send the service animal to a veterinary clinic.
  - 3.7.1 If possible, the service animal should be transported to the owner's veterinary clinic of choice or the nearest 24-hour emergency veterinary clinic. An injured service animal should not be transported to Animal Control.

#### **4.0 Service Animals in AFD Facilities**

- 4.1 In general, the procedures for service animals visiting AFD facilities is the same as those applicable inquiries, exclusions and other special guidelines covered previously in this document.
- 4.2 In AFD facilities, employees with allergies to animal dander or fear of dogs or miniature horses can ask their immediate supervisor if they can be relocated to another part of the facility if the service animal will be on the premise for an extended period of time.
- 4.3 Employees requesting reasonable accommodation for a disability, which may include a request to use a service animal at work, should contact the AFD's Labor Relations Specialist to submit their request for a reasonable accommodation and initiate the interactive process.



- 4.4 If assistance is required with a service animal at an AFD facility, notify the appropriate supervisor through the chain of command.