



Virginia Beach Department of Emergency Medical Services



OPERATIONS

SERVICE ANIMALS

PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to personnel who encounter individuals who are assisted by service animals.

APPLICABILITY: This policy shall apply to all certified personnel operating under the oversight of the Department of Emergency Medical Services.

POLICY STATEMENT: It shall be the policy of the Department of Emergency Medical Services to follow federal, state, and local guidelines and policies in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

DEFINITIONS

Service Animal -- A dog (or miniature horse) that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The task(s) performed by the service animal must be directly related to the person's disability.

Job, Work or Task -- The service animal must be trained to take a specific action when needed to assist the person with a disability. 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, or calming a person during an anxiety attack.

Assistance/Emotional Support Animal – These animals provide comfort, companionship, or emotional support. They can include various animals such as birds, reptiles, cats, etc. Because they have not been trained to perform a specific job or task, they do not qualify as service animals.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE SERVICE ANIMAL

Transporting personnel must determine whether not the animal is a service animal.

- An animal with a vest, ID tag or specific harness it not necessarily a service animal.
- A note/order from a physician does not make an animal into a service animal.

According to the ADA, crew members may ask only two (2) specific questions to determine if an animal is a service animal:

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

Crews are not allowed to request any documentation for the service animal, require that the service animal demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the person's disability.

The ADA does not require service animals to wear a vest, ID tag, or specific harness.

TRANSPORTING IN THE AMBULANCE

A service animal must be allowed to ride in the ambulance with the patient/handler being transported unless one of the following exceptions occur:

1. The service animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective control (This can include a patient who is unconscious, combative, or has altered mental status).
2. The service animal will not fit in the ambulance with the emergency personnel and the injured person thereby compromising services and treatment.

An EMS Supervisor must be contacted prior to denying transport for the service animal.

ALTERNATE TRANSPORT OF THE SERVICE ANIMAL

If it has been determined that the service animal cannot accompany the patient in the ambulance, on scene personnel should make other arrangements to have the service animal transported to the hospital. 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.

Alternative transportation options include:

- Have the animal transported by a friend or family member in a private vehicle, with the permission of the patient.
- Transport the service animal in a response vehicle (i.e. police car, zone car, etc.).
- Request an Animal Control Officer to assist.

Any time a service animal is not transported with the patient, details regarding that decision and alternative as well as the means of alternative transport should be documented in the patient care report.

GENERAL SERVICE ANIMAL CONSIDERATIONS

Staff are not required to provide care or food for the service animal.

Staff's allergies and/or fear of service animal are not valid reasons for denying access.

Personnel should document on the patient care report instances where the patient utilizes a service animal, and should document on the patient care report whether or not the service animal was transported with the patient.

When transporting a patient with a service animal, every effort should be made to do so in a safe manner for the patient, the service animal and the crew members. If possible, the animal should be secured in some manner in order to prevent injury to either the animal or the crew during transport. Safe transport devices may include crates, cages or pet seat belt restraints.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR NON-SERVICE ANIMALS

Assistance/emotional support animals will not be transported to the hospital in ambulances or other response vehicles.

Unless emergency conditions dictate otherwise, efforts should be made to ensure the welfare of the animal. If a friend or family member is not available to assume care for the animal, an Animal Control Officer should be requested to assist.

ORDERED:



12/4/18

EMS Chief

Date