

Know the Law: Service Animals

Service animals can be helpful companions for some individuals with disabilities. The most commonly known service animals are Guide Dogs who help people with vision loss. However, service animals are also used for a variety of invisible disabilities such as Epilepsy, Autism, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Anxiety.

Did you know?

There are **no restrictions on what type of animal** can be used as a service animal. An animal is considered a service animal if:

- it wears a harness, vest or other visual indicator
- the person with a disability provides [documentation from a regulated health professional](#)

Sometimes you might be able to identify that an animal is a service animal because it helps a person with a disability perform certain tasks, like opening a door, or picking up a dropped object.

Never make assumptions. If you cannot easily identify that the animal is a service animal, you can ask the person to provide documentation (e.g. template, letter, form) from a regulated health professional. The documentation must confirm that the person needs the service animal for reasons relating to their disability.

Welcome service animals into public areas of your workplace or business. In cases where the law prohibits service animals, provide another way for the person to access your goods, services or facilities.

Service animals have a job to do. They are not pets. Avoid touching or addressing a service animal.

Food Premises

There have been recent changes to R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 562: Food Premises, now known as [Ontario regulation 493/17: Food Premises](#), which has been amended to align with the Integrated Accessibility Standards with regards to service animals and their access within a food premise. While the Integrated Accessibility Standards have always included all service animals, the Food Premises Regulations previously only included guide dogs and service dogs.

Under Ontario Regulation **493/17** under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, **all types of service animals are allowed in restaurants** and other areas where food is normally served, sold or offered for sale. If a law bans service animals from certain areas of your business, such as the kitchen, work with your customer to find a way for

them to access your services if needed. In some cases, food might be prepared in the same areas where it is served, sold or offered for sale. In these cases, organizations are encouraged to contact their local [Public Health Unit](#) to learn more about how to interpret their requirements.

If you have questions about improving accessibility, contact Clarington's Accessibility Advisory Committee at accessibility@clarington.net or 905-623-3379 x 2131.