



## **NEWSLETTER #11**

### **SERVICE DOGS VS. PERSONAL PROTECTION DOGS**

**NOTE:** This topic has not been developed through personal opinions. The information provided below is a gathering of factual information with sources provided and a combination of viewpoints expressed within the service dog community through blogs, social media posts, and live social discussions.

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As you all know, we love covering controversial subjects within the service dog and dog training community and this one is one of the top ones out there.

A very sensitive topic in the service dog community is service dogs being trained in personal protection and/or Schutzhund/IGP, often raising the questions of legality, functionality, and safety.

**So, let's do a breakdown of the issues involved:**

#### **1. Controversy Around Service Dogs Doing Personal Protection**

The primary controversy stems from the perception of what constitutes a service dog under the law.

As most of us know, service dogs perform tasks related to assisting individuals with disabilities, such as guiding the visually impaired or alerting people with diabetes, only 2 of many examples.

When a service dog is trained for personal protection, it evokes concerns about public safety, potential aggression, and a misinterpretation of the dog's role.

### **Should a dog trained to mitigate for a handler in public be trained to bite another human?**

The public often sees that this individual essentially has a trained weapon, so this in part is seen as the concern. Yes, studies have shown that a dog trained in PPD is less likely to have an unprovoked bite compared to untrained dogs, but the public's perception has not wavered.

While it is controversial, it is not explicitly against the law for a service dog to perform personal protection tasks, but these tasks must be directly related to the handler's disability. Personal protection cannot solely be its only purpose or task.

Now, there was a revision that was supposed to clear this specific subject up but, it still seems to have created even more arguments.

### **Revision:**

It's not in the ADA, it's discussed in an Appendix of the Code of Federal Regulations. The Department basically discusses the loose wording of the term "protection" in the ADA. This is found under "Service Animal" - "Minimal Protection" under 28 CFR in Part 35 Appendix A to Part 35, Guidance to Revisions of ADA:

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2023-title28-vol1/pdf/CFR-2023-title28-vol1-part35-appA.pdf>

"The department recognizes that despite its best efforts to provide clarification, the 'minimal protection' language appears to have been misinterpreted. While the department maintains that protection from danger is one of the key functions that service animals perform for the benefit of persons with disabilities, the department recognizes that an animal individually trained to provide aggressive protection, such as an attack dog, is not appropriately considered a service animal. Therefore, the department has decided to modify the 'minimal protection' language to read 'non-violent protection,' thereby excluding so-called 'attack dogs' or dogs with traditional 'protection training' as service animals. The department believes that this modification to the service animal definition will eliminate confusion, without restricting unnecessarily the type of work or tasks that service animals may perform. The department's modification also clarifies that the crime-deterrent effect of a dog's presence by itself, does not qualify as work or tasks for purposes of the service animal definition".

They confirmed that only "non-violent protection" or "passive protection" (generally accepted as tasks like Blocking) is permitted.

## **2. Difference Between Schutzhund and Personal Protection Dog**

Schutzhund: Schutzhund is a dog sport that originated in Germany, primarily focused on testing working dogs in three major areas: tracking, obedience, and protection. The protection aspect is strictly controlled and involves specific training scenarios where the dog must demonstrate controlled aggression, bite work, and the ability to protect its handler using a decoy. This training is more based on prey drive whereas PPD is more based on defensive and prey drive. For example: A dog that's in pursuit of its prey and when a dog is in prey mode, the dog gets into chase mode, and now he's having fun, he thinks of it as a game. A dog in prey mode is not thinking about protecting himself or others.

When a wolf chases a rabbit, does he worry about the rabbit hurting him? This is a key difference here.

IGP protection is more a demonstration of protection. Is the dog going through all the motions of protection? Yes. But they're just that, memorized and pre-taught routines where the dog knows exactly what to do and to expect, and he is trained to look good while he's doing it.

The dog is performing and he's not worried at all about protecting himself because in IGP no harm is done to the dog. The dog is in prey drive; he's having fun playing a game he knows well and has practiced often.

**Personal Protection Dog:** A personal protection dog is typically trained to **protect an individual** in real-world situations. This training may be more aggressive and less controlled than Schutzhund, focusing on situational awareness and the ability to fend off threats. Personal protection dogs are often trained to respond immediately without the structured scenarios seen in dog sports. This is why the public eye is far touchier on the aspect of an unconscious handler with someone trying to assist them and if the dog will perceive them as a threat and immediately act upon it.

**Personal Protection Dog training is based on defense drive and prey drive.** The dog is defending himself, and his handler, family or property if applicable. In Personal Protection, the training is reversed. Because for the dog, the protection is real. It's not a memorized routine he's seen 100s of times. It's a threat approaching him (and his handler), and it's up to him to make that threat go away.

When a dog is in defense-based protection mode, his protection is real. When training for PPD, these dogs are tested in random locations at random times and different scenarios all together over time. Thus, to the dog they should be on alert at all times of their surroundings.

### **3. Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and Personal Protection Dogs**

The ADA does not recognize personal protection dogs as service animals if their main function is to provide protection rather than assist with a disability. This means that while a personal protection dog may offer a

sense of security to its handler, it does not meet the ADA's criteria to be a service dog unless it has been specifically trained to perform tasks that help a person with a disability.

In summary, while it may not be illegal for a service dog to engage in personal protection, there is controversy surrounding the topic due to public perception and safety concerns. The distinction between Schutzhund/IGP and personal protection dogs lies in the focus and context of their training.

With all of this being discussed, what are your thoughts? Do you believe a dog trained in PPD should be allowed to qualify as a service animal or should service dogs be trained in bite sports in general? Legally, from our understanding of the ADA along with other professionals reached out to on this subject matter, PPD is against the ADA. As a dog trainer and a service dog trainer ourselves, it was made clear insurance wise we would not be covered if we trained a dog in personal protection.

We would love to start a conversation and hear what our readers have to say on this matter, as we have heard and seen both sides!

Warm regards,

The Pup-Cessories Crafts Team

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