



NEWSLETTER #4

WHAT IS CONSIDERED PROVIDING REASONABLE ACCOMODATIONS?

Navigating the complex landscape of requesting reasonable accommodations for our service dogs can sometimes present challenges that require careful consideration. While the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that reasonable accommodations must be made, it's essential to understand that there are situations where requests might not be considered reasonable.

One key point to remember is that the ADA law does not provide a specific definition of what constitutes a reasonable accommodation, leaving room for interpretation and negotiation between service dog handlers and establishments. It's crucial for both parties to engage in open communication and find common ground to ensure a positive outcome.

Consider a scenario where a tandem team wishes to dine at a small restaurant that lacks the physical space to accommodate multiple service dogs along with patrons, and staff. In such cases, it may not be feasible to grant the request due to space limitations and potential disruptions to the dining experience of others. In this situation, they may offer a discount for take-out, or if an outside option is available, that should be considered. Same goes for small doctor's offices. Often it's hard enough accommodating someone say in a wheelchair, using mobility aids, having even one service dog on top of a doctor and possible tech. We have experienced this quite often. In times like these, if I know ahead of time I may leave my dog at home.

Similarly, organizing a service dog meetup with multiple teams in a store could lead to overcrowding and interfere with the normal operations of the business. If the presence of numerous service dog's handlers can disrupt the stores' ability to function properly and negatively impacts all other customers and staff. In these situations, the establishment may politely request the teams to leave, especially if they are not making purchases.

While the law mandates reasonable accommodations, it is essential for service dog handlers to approach these situations with a sense of understanding and collaboration. Adopting an attitude of entitlement or demanding strict adherence without considering the practical implications can create tension and hinder progress, get the police involved and lead to possible trespassing notices.

In instances of inconvenience or frustration, it is paramount for all handlers to maintain composure, show respect, and strive to find mutually agreeable solutions. By fostering a spirit of cooperation and empathy, we can work towards ensuring that both the needs of service dog handlers and the operational requirements of businesses are met harmoniously.

Remember, effective communication and a willingness to compromise can pave the way for successful outcomes when seeking reasonable accommodations for our service dogs.

Here are some key strategies to help you navigate these interactions successfully:

- 1. Be Informed:** Before approaching an establishment with a request for accommodation, ensure you are well-informed about your rights under the ADA and any relevant local laws. Understanding the legal framework will empower you to advocate for your needs effectively.
- 2. Initiate Dialogue:** Approach the establishment politely and respectfully to discuss your accommodation needs. If asked the 2 questions, clearly explain the task(s) of your service dog, the specific accommodation you are requesting, and how it aligns with your disability-related requirements. You may not like being sent to the back of say a restaurant, however this may be a positive solution to assure your dog

is out of the way, safe and not hinder the workings of the business. Some may see this as 'separating us away from non-disabled' individuals, but honestly, I prefer it. It is also less attention on me and my dog.

3. **Offer Solutions:** If the initial accommodation request poses challenges for the establishment, be open to discussing alternative solutions. Propose options that can meet both your needs and the establishment's limitations, fostering a spirit of cooperation and flexibility can demonstrate to the restaurant's owner or staff that you are not there to cause a scene and just wish to enjoy a meal at their establishment.
4. **Educate and Advocate:** Take the opportunity to educate the establishment about service dog etiquette, the important work performed by service dogs, and the significance of accommodating individuals with disabilities. Advocacy efforts can help promote understanding and cooperation. At least, if they're open to it. We all hope they would be, but a lot of places barely know the law or just don't understand it properly.
5. **Seek Mediation:** In cases where communication reaches an impasse, consider involving a neutral mediator or seeking assistance from disability rights organizations or legal resources. Mediation can help facilitate constructive dialogue and find mutually acceptable solutions. But keep in mind. In some situations, we need to know when to pick and choose our battles. Is this a location you will frequent often? Is it worth going as far as getting police involved, filing a report, and reporting to the DOJ? In a lot of cases such as this, the DOJ dismisses these cases as they are not all seen as serious matters.
6. **Follow Up:** After reaching an agreement on accommodations, follow up with the establishment to ensure the arrangements are implemented as discussed. Maintaining open communication and addressing any issues promptly can help sustain positive relationships in the long term. By approaching interactions with a positive attitude and a focus on finding common ground, service dog handlers can enhance understanding, promote inclusivity, and foster harmonious relationships with establishments.

In the face of challenges or resistance, maintain a calm and composed demeanor while persistently advocating for your rights. Keep the focus on the importance of your service dog in assisting you with your disability and the necessity of the accommodations you are requesting. By proactively preparing, staying informed, and employing effective communication strategies, service dog handlers can navigate accommodation challenges with confidence and assertiveness. Remember that advocating for your rights is crucial in ensuring equal access and inclusion for individuals with disabilities, but also keep in mind businesses and their rights as well.

Wishing you a wonderful reading experience!

Warm regards,

The Pup-Cessories Crafts Team