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“Service Animals in the Libraries: Developing Best Practices for Multiple Service Points.”

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Available at: http://works.bepress.com/rebecca_marrall/21/
Service Animals in the Library

How One Library Developed a Best Practices Protocol for Multiple Service Points

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Rebecca M. Marrall is the Discovery Services Librarian at Western Washington University Libraries. In addition to participating in credit instruction and research consultation, she chairs the Western Libraries Diversity Committee and the OneSearch Management Team (the latter being the Libraries catalog management and usability working group).

After graduating with her MLISc from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in 2010, Rebecca accepted the Diversity Resident Librarian position at Western Libraries. This position evolved into her current one, allowing Rebecca to create and lead several events and discussions within the Libraries about diversity-related matters. Research interests include diversity and inclusion practices in LIS settings; library instruction; and user experiences. She is also thrilled to have been a 2015 ALA Emerging Leader.
Disclaimer

• I am not a lawyer. I am not equipped or authorized (in any way) to give anyone legal advice, and I will not do so today.

• This webinar is devoted to discussing how my library responded to concerns about service animals. I will provide an overview of the process.

• If you have questions about WA State or Federal law, please seek appropriate legal advice.
Today’s Agenda

• Purpose: This webinar will provide an overview of how an academic library developed a Best Practices document for its personnel in order to consistently address concerns about service animals.

• Agenda:
  • What Started This Process?
  • Overview of Workshops
  • Results? Best Practices Document
  • Reflections + Hindsight
How did this process begin at Western Libraries?
Common Questions about Service Animals

• Awareness (Definitions, Legalities):

  • How does the law define a service animal?
  • What functions or duties will service animals perform?
  • What species can serve as a service animal?
  • Who may have a service animal?
  • What behaviors can we expect from a service animal?
  • What laws govern the use and performance of service animals?
Common Questions, Cont’d

• Practicalities:
  • Under what circumstances may library professionals approach a patron with a service animal?
  • How do library professionals address patron complaints?
  • What happens with a library professional has a conflicting disability? Such as a phobia or an allergy?
Solution? A Workshop

Workshop Components

• Disability Definitions + Why Service Animals are Necessary

• Definition of Service Animals
  • Service Animals
  • Therapy Animals (Brief Discussion)

• Laws:
  • Federal / Americans with Disabilities Act
  • Washington State Human Rights
  • Fair Housing Act

• Small Group Exercise: Scenarios & Proposed Responses

• Group Share/Reflections
Relevant Legislation + Resources

• WA State Law:
  • WA State Human Rights Commission

• Americans with Disabilities Act
  • U.S. Department of Justice (Office of Civil Rights)

• Sources + Bibliography Available
  • LibGuide: [http://libguides.wwu.edu/service_animals](http://libguides.wwu.edu/service_animals)
As of July 21, 2007, the definition of disability, found in RCW 49.60.040 is as follows:

(a) ‘Disability’ means the presence of a sensory, mental, or physical impairment that:
   (i) Is medically cognizable or diagnosable; or
   (ii) Exists as a record or history; or
   (iii) Is perceived to exist whether or not it exists in fact.

(b) A disability exists whether it is temporary or permanent, common or uncommon, mitigated or unmitigated, or whether or not it limits the ability to work generally or work at a particular job or whether or not it limits any other activity within the scope of this chapter.

(c) For purposes of this definition, ‘impairment’ includes, but is not limited to:

   (i) Any physiological disorder, or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: Neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory, including speech organs, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitor-urinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine; or

   (ii) Any mental, developmental, traumatic, or psychological disorder, including but not limited to cognitive limitation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.”

Definition of Service Animals

• According to RCW 49.60.040...
  
  • “‘Dog guide’ means a dog that is trained for the purpose of guiding blind persons or a dog that is trained for the purpose of assisting hearing impaired persons.”

  • “‘Service animal’ means an animal that is trained for the purpose of assisting or accommodating a sensory, mental, or physical disability of a person with a disability.”

• Source: [http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=49.60.040](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=49.60.040)
Examples of Services Provided

• According to RCW 49.60.218...

  • “…Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing nonviolent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors….”

• Source: [http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=49.60.218](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=49.60.218)
“How does this definition differ from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA or federal) definition?”

“The Washington State definition is broader and covers a greater number of impairments and medical, mental, or psychological conditions...”

Other Considerations...

- According to this same guide...
  - Service animals are not pets (thus, a “No pets” policy does not apply).
  - Service animals are not required to wear a harness or vest.
  - You may not inquire about a patron’s disability.
  - If identified as a service animal, the patron and his/her are allowed anywhere within a public building.
  - Service animals are working companions. Do not touch without express invitation.
Small Group Activity: Scenario + Response

After providing information on types of service and companion animals, and about relevant legislation, I distributed three scenarios among participants.

a) Asked attendees to divide into small groups, and review a given scenario.

b) Upon reviewing the scenario, they were invited to discuss their thoughts and/or questions with one another.

c) Come back together for a group discussion of that particular scenario.

d) Share the recommended practice and invite further discussion.
Example of Given Scenario

**Scenario:**
A dog accompanies its owner into the Libraries. The dog is quiet, responds to verbal commands quickly, and displays exemplary behavior. However, the dog carries no outward or visible designation as a service animal.

**Response:**
Service dogs are not required to carry an outward designation of their service affiliation. If the dog is not disturbing library patrons, then there should be no reason for approaching the human partner. However, if a patron complains, you may ask the following questions (see ‘Suggested Language’). If the human partner answers in the negative, you may ask them to remove the animal from the Libraries.

**Suggested Language:**
“Is this animal a service animal? What tasks does this animal perform? Thank you for your time.”
Scenario:
An ill-behaved dog with a Service Animal harness is barking and lunging at a patron who is not its handler. The patron who is being barked at is visibly upset and is attempting to walk away quickly.

Response:
You may ask the patron to control their service animal. If they refuse or argue, first explain that the dog is menacing other patrons. If they still refuse, call UPD and ask that they escort the patron out of the building.

Suggested Language:
“Please bring your service animal under control.”
If the situation escalates: “Please remove your service animal from the Libraries.”
Best Practices Document

Or, “This is great, but how will I remember it all?”
Formation of the Best Practices Document

Colleagues responded to the trainings with enthusiasm. However a concern emerged and was often repeated:

“How do I remember all of this information two weeks from now? Two months? Two years?”

The solution was to develop a two page document that housed the workshop content in a streamlined fashion. This way, colleagues could...

• Save the document to their desktop; or
• Check the copy housed on the institutional Intranet; and
• Refer to the guide whenever they needed to.
Best Practices Content

• Guidelines
  • Relevant Legislation
  • Key Features to Remember (In Accordance with State Law and University Policy)

• When to approach a patron with a service animal?
  • Partnered with Libraries Administration and legal experts.

• If you decide to approach a patron with a service animal, please remember that...

• Addressing Patron Complaints: Potential Scenarios + Suggested Responses.
  • Examples of scenarios, with an accompanying explanation and suggested language for responding to the given situation.
Service Animals Training
Addressing Training Needs at Multiple Service Points
On-Going Training + Consultation

**Service Point Training:**

- Met with the Circulation Services Team for individual Q & A during a Staff Meeting.
- The Circulation Services Team at Western Libraries is responsible for opening/closing procedures. Thus, they are always in the building; furthermore, they get the widest array of questions (in type and frequency).

**Student Employee Training:**

- Annual participation in Student Personnel Training in September (prior to start of the academic year).
- Western Libraries relies upon our student personnel to staff many of our service points. Thus, it’s important that they have this information in order to promote consistent practices.
On-Going Training + Consultation

Service Animals in Classrooms Training:

• Met with the Library Faculty for Q & A during a Brown Bag on Instructional Strategies for Classroom Disability-related Accommodations.

• Discussed the following...
  • Notification procedures (i.e., When will I know that a student with a disability - and a service animal - will be in my class?);
  • Appropriate / empathetic questions and strategies; and
  • Who to contact for more information.
Reflections
Or, “Hindsight is 20/20.”
Overall Timeline of Events

May 2014: Stakeholder discussion; workshop development.

June 2014: Two identical workshops held on different days and different times for maximum attendance.


September 2014 (And On-Going): Service point trainings for Circulation and Learning Commons student personnel.
Final Thoughts?

• Legal Advice: Vetting any proposed policy or document is necessary.
  • It is very important to get expert feedback on your proposed practice.
  • Put another way: Your policy or document is not finished until you have legally vetted the proposed practice / policy.
• Partner with Library Administration Team
• Importance of Empathy
• Consistency is Key
  • Respond to concerns with consistency, equality, and equity.
Note: Please know that I’m hard of hearing, and thus may request that you to type out questions through the Chat Feature. Thanks for understanding!