



Standard Operating Procedure

Procedure Title:	Handling Service Animals in Clinic
Date:	1/1/2025
Version:	1.0
Department:	All Departments
Approved By:	Brooke Gregory

Purpose:

To provide clear guidance to all clinic staff on handling service animals in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Oregon state law.

Scope:

This policy applies to all staff at Complete Care and covers all interactions with patients or visitors who bring animals into the clinic.

Policy Statement:

Complete Care is committed to providing an inclusive environment while ensuring compliance with ADA regulations regarding service animals. Staff will follow these procedures to determine whether an animal qualifies as a service animal and handle situations where an animal's presence may not be appropriate.

Definitions:

- **Service Animal:** A dog (or, in rare cases, a miniature horse) that is individually trained to perform tasks for a person with a disability. (Source: ADA.gov - <https://www.ada.gov/resources/service-animals-2010-requirements/>)
- **Emotional Support Animal (ESA):** An animal that provides comfort but is **not** trained to perform specific tasks related to a disability and does **not** qualify as a service animal under the ADA. (Source: ADA.gov - <https://www.ada.gov/resources/service-animals-2010-requirements/>)
- **Therapy Animal:** An animal trained to provide comfort to groups but is **not** considered a service animal under the ADA. (Source: ADA National Network - <https://adata.org/factsheet/service-animals>)

Procedure:

1. Determining if an Animal is a Service Animal

If it is **not obvious** that an animal is a service animal, staff may **only ask** the following two questions:

1. **"Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?"**
2. **"What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?"**



Prohibited Questions:

- Do **not** ask about the person's disability.
- Do **not** require documentation, certification, or proof that the dog is a service animal.
- Do **not** ask for the animal to demonstrate its trained task.

(Source: ADA.gov - <https://www.ada.gov/resources/service-animals-2010-requirements/>)

2. Permitting Service Animals in the Clinic

- Service animals **must be allowed** in all areas of the clinic where patients are allowed, including waiting rooms and patient treatment areas.
- The service animal must be **under control** at all times (on a leash, harness, or under voice control if needed for the task performed). (Source: U.S. Department of Justice, ADA Requirements - https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm)

3. When a Service Animal May Be Asked to Leave

A service animal may **only** be asked to leave if:

- **The animal is out of control, and the handler does not take effective action to control it.**
- **The animal is not housebroken.**
- **The animal's presence poses a direct threat** to health and safety (e.g., highly sterile areas where even human visitors are restricted).

If a service animal is removed, **the patient must still be offered medical services.**

(Source: ADA National Network - <https://adata.org/factsheet/service-animals>)

4. Emotional Support and Therapy Animals

- Emotional support and therapy animals are not service animals and are **not permitted** in patient areas.
- If a patient claims their emotional support animal must stay, staff should politely inform them that only ADA-defined service animals are permitted.

(Source: ADA.gov - <https://www.ada.gov/resources/service-animals-2010-requirements/>)

5. Addressing Misrepresentation of Service Animals

Oregon law (ORS 659A.143) makes **misrepresenting a pet as a service animal illegal** and punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000.

- If staff suspect misrepresentation, they should not argue but should calmly restate the clinic's policy and refer to the two allowed questions.

(Source: Oregon State Legislature - https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors659A.html)

Enforcement & Documentation:

- If an issue arises, document the interaction in a brief, factual manner in a patient case.
- If a patient refuses to comply with the clinic's policy, escalate to management.
- All staff will be trained on this SOP to ensure compliance.

Staff Training & Implementation:

- This SOP will be reviewed and discussed with all clinic employees.



- Refresher training will be provided annually or as needed.

For further questions, please contact Complete Care Practice Manager.

Acknowledgment:

I acknowledge that I have read and understand this SOP. I agree to follow these guidelines in all patient and visitor interactions.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____