

## **Appalachian Mountain Club**

### **Service Animals on Volunteer-Led Activity**

#### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q: What are the laws that apply to service animals on my AMC volunteer-led activity?**

A: Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), organizations that are open to members of the public are prohibited from discriminating against individuals with disabilities. The ADA requires these organizations to allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals on activities it sponsors except in specific circumstances (see below).

**Q. What is a service animal?**

A: The ADA defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. If they meet this definition, animals are considered service animals under the ADA regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government.

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that the individual with a disability cannot perform for himself or herself.

**Q. How can I tell if an animal is really a service animal and not just a pet?**

A: Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars and harnesses or are licensed or certified and have identification papers. However, such documentation may not be required as a condition for including an individual accompanied by a service animal on an AMC-sponsored activity. Although a number of states have programs to certify service animals, you may not insist on proof of state certification before permitting the service animal to accompany the person with a disability on a club sponsored activity.

In instances where the participant's disability is not apparent to the activity leader, the leader is permitted to ask two questions regarding the animal:

- (1) Is the animal required because of a disability?
- (2) What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

The leader may not require that the service animal actually exhibit the task(s) the animal is trained to perform.

**Q. Suppose, in the view of the leader, the excursion is not suitable for the service animal and /or the individual with the disability?**

The leader is not required to make accommodations for a potential program participant that will fundamentally alter the nature of the activity or impact the safety of other participants. Leaders are encouraged to use their judgment and screen participants for higher risk activities as well as share details with potential participants about the requirements to participate in a club-sponsored activity. Questions regarding service animals or screening participants can be directed to AMC's Director of Outdoor Leadership. [leadership@outdoors.org](mailto:leadership@outdoors.org)