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Trustee Tale

Trustee Tale is a joint project of the Manitowoc Calumet Library System, Nicolet Federated Library System, Outagamie Waupaca Library System, Winnefox Library System and Wisconsin Valley Library System.

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions for future articles, contact your system director.

The Library and Service Animals

Libraries want to be spaces that are welcoming to all. But sometimes a welcoming space for one, infringes on the space or safety of another. This is why behavior policies are so important. A behavior policy should clearly explain how a patron must conduct themselves in the library and on library property and what consequences will result from policy violations.

Behavior policies apply to service animals as well. Federal law, under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Wisconsin law specify that a person with a disability is permitted to use a service animal in public places, including the library. Under federal law, only dogs or miniature ponies that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities qualify as service animals. However, in Wisconsin, service animals can be any type of animal. Animals which solely provide emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA or state law and are not required to be allowed in public places.



Examples of such work or tasks service animals provide include, but are not limited to, guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, protecting a person during a medical emergency, reminding a person to take their medications, or calming a person during an anxiety attack.

Libraries cannot deny a qualifying service animal access to the library. Even if other patrons are allergic, a well-behaved service animal must be allowed. Additionally, library staff should know that they are not allowed to interrogate individuals who bring animals into the building or ask for proof of disability. In Wisconsin, staff may only ask one question: "Is the service animal required because of a disability?"

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If a patron answers positively, their service animal is allowed in the library.

However, inappropriate behavior from a service animal can result in their removal. If the service animal is not housebroken, is out of control and the handler is unable to regain control, or poses a direct threat to human health and safety, the service animal can be denied entry or asked to leave.

Educate staff about how to provide a welcoming space for service animals, and what to do if the animal misbehaves. If an incident requires removal of the animal from the library, staff should find other accommodations for the patron to access library services. Perhaps items can be delivered curbside or a patron can access the library's Wi-Fi in the parking lot.

For more information regarding the requirements for Wisconsin libraries, see the Wisconsin Legislative Council's 2019 IssueBrief on [Service and Support Animals](#).