

Service Animal Procedures

Policy

Life Church values every person and seeks to make services and events accessible, while maintaining safety. As an exempted entity under Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Life Church will only allow trained service dogs for individuals with visual, hearing, sensory, physical, or other medical conditions.

Definitions

- **Service Dog:** Under the ADA, a service dog is trained to perform specific tasks or work or an individual with a disability. The task(s) performed by the dog must be related to the person's disability. Service animals do not have to be professionally trained and can be trained by their owner.
 - Note, service animals *in training* are not service animals under the ADA.
- **Emotional Support Animal:** This is a term used to describe animals that provide comfort just by being with a person. Emotional support animals do not qualify as service animals under the ADA and are not permitted at Life Church.
 - Note, in some cases, psychiatric service dogs have been trained to perform a task to support individuals with serious psychiatric conditions (such as PTSD or panic attacks), but these tasks go beyond mere comfort.
- **Exempted Entity:** While many public and private entities are required to comply with Title III of the ADA, including its provisions regarding service animals, churches and religious organizations are exempted from those requirements and are free to establish their own accessibility policies.

Guidelines

- If you observe someone accompanied by a dog, please approach them, and determine if the animal is: 1) a service dog, 2) an emotional support dog, or 3) a pet.
 - You may determine if the dog is a service animal by asking the following two questions:
 - **Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?**
 - **What specific work or tasks is the dog trained to perform?**
- One of our Core Values at Life Church is to Prioritize People.
- When communicating with anyone regarding a service animal, we want to ensure they know that all people are welcome.
- You may not request any documentation for the dog, require that the dog demonstrate its task, or inquire further about the person's disability.



- Keep in mind that under the ADA, mandatory registration of service animals is not required, and people can buy and sell service animal certification or registration documents online.

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- Pets or emotional support animals are not allowed in services or the building unless the person has special permission for an event. You will be notified in advance if any such permission is granted.
 - When seating an individual with a qualified service dog, place them on the end of a row on the outer edges of the auditorium.
 - If the service dog demonstrates threatening behavior or becomes a distraction, you may ask the person to remove the dog from the service or building.
 - Under the ADA, distractions may include the animal not being harnessed, leashed, or tethered while in public places, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the person's disability prevents use of these devices. In that case, the owner must use voice, signal, or other effective means to maintain control of the animal.
 - If the dog barks more than once without provocation, destroys property, or is not house broken, this would indicate the dog is out of control.

If you have any questions about this policy or its administration, please contact your Campus Pastor.