

## Service Animal Awareness

Traditionally, service animals were used as guides for people with visual impairments, but today service animals are used by people for many different reasons such as alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure or a number of other special tasks.

There are more than 20,000 service animals in the nation working to help people with disabilities. Service animals and their owners should be respected and certain guidelines should be followed to ensure that the service animals can safely perform their functions.

## Service Animal Etiquette

- Do not pet a service animal. While they may look like friendly animals, you may distract the service animal from its work and startle it, putting you and others in a dangerous position.
- Always speak to the service animal's owner before going near the animal.
- Do not offer food or treats to any service animal.
- Just because a person has a service animal does not mean they want to speak about their disability and the reason they have the animal. Be courteous to the owner.

## Service Animals in the Public

- Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), privately-owned businesses that serve the public, including hospitals, restaurants, hotels, retail stores, government facilities and workplaces are prohibited from discriminating against individuals with disabilities who have a service animal.

- A service animal must be allowed to travel with its owner, wherever the owner is normally allowed. This does include riding in public transportation and emergency vehicles.
- Not all people using a service animal have a visible disability. Service animals can be used for heart problems, hearing or even physiological or emotional conditions. Take this into consideration when a service animal is present and do not ask why the person has a service animal.
- The service animal is the private property of the owner. Treat the service animal as such and be cautious of the consequences such as growling, biting, protectiveness of the owner and other irregular behavior.



**For more information, visit [www.AUS.com/Tips](http://www.AUS.com/Tips)**