



How do I know if a service animal is real?

Dogs are by far the most common animals used as service animals. In Canada, other animals that we are aware of include: ferrets, cats, rabbits and other small animals for emotional support. Horse therapy is also becoming widely accepted.

In Ontario, under the Access to Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Regulations (O. Reg. 165/16, s. 16.) a service animal is defined as:

(4) For the purposes of this Part, an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if,

- (a) the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or*
- (b) the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:*

- (i) A member of the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario.*
- (ii) A member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.*
- (iii) A member of the College of Nurses of Ontario.*
- (iv) A member of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.*
- (v) A member of the College of Optometrists of Ontario.*
- (vi) A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.*
- (vii) A member of the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario.*
- (viii) A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.*
- (ix) A member of the College of Registered Psychotherapists and Registered Mental Health Therapists of Ontario.*

Quite simply, one should err on the side of caution. If the handler of an animal is able to satisfy (4)(a) or (b) above, then the team should be treated as a handler with a service animal and their right of access and/or service must be protected.

The paramountcy of Human Rights Legislation in the 14 jurisdictions of Canada include a message similar to that of Ontario. We believe that it is fair to state that every person in Canada, regardless of their specific characteristics, has the right to be in public spaces and to have their right of access and/or service protected. That right does not consider if the person is accompanied with a service dog or animal, as the right belongs to the person.