



Village House Supervised Visitation and Exchanges Facility

SERVICE AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL POLICY

Policy:

The mission of Village House is to assist, support, and provide a safe and comfortable home-like visitation setting to the children and family members of Sandusky County and surrounding communities, who have been affected by abuse, neglect, divorce or separation. Village House strives towards always ensuring the safety and well-being of all children, visitors, volunteers and paid staff during their time at our facility. Village House understands that family dynamics and individuals' needs are all different and unique. We strive to accommodate specific needs to the best of our ability; but unfortunately, we may not always be able to approve all requests due to various agency limitations or restrictions. Village House will also work towards the assurance that the rights of all persons using our agency are respected.

Definition:

The Department of Justice issued revised ADA regulations which cover Title II (state and local government programs) and Title III (places of public accommodation, such as restaurants or retail merchants), which took effect March 15, 2011. These regulations revise the definition of service animal and add additional provisions. Definition A service animal is any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not considered service animals. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability.

Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks.
- Alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds.
- Providing non-violent protection or rescue work.
- Pulling a wheelchair.
- Assisting an individual during a seizure.
- Alerting individuals to the presence of allergens.
- Retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone.
- Providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities.
- Helping individuals with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors.

**The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship are *not considered work or tasks* under the definition of a service animal.

Procedure:

1. Any and all visitors, volunteers, contractors, or paid staff whom wish to bring a Service Animal along with them into the Village House, must complete the *Service Animal Information* form and return to the Executive Director.
 - a. Determination: Once the completed Service Animal Information form has been submitted, the Village House Executive Director will review the information given. Based upon the ADA regulations, the Village House will then determine if the request can be approved. The Executive Director will contact the individual or legal guardian within 2 business days with the decision (Exceptions may be granted by the Executive Director under special circumstances, as needed.)
 - b. Approval: Once the request to bring a service animal into the facility has been approved, the individual or legal guardian will meet with the Executive Director to review and sign the *Service Animal Agreement and Owner Responsibility* form.
2. Allegation or Incident of Damage or Harm: Any allegation or incident of damage or harm from the approved Service Animal towards any Village House property, visiting clients, paid staff, contractor or volunteers, must be reported immediately to the Executive Director. The proper authorities will be notified if needed. Village House will make every effort to cooperate with investigations conducted by legal authorities. If appropriate, the client complaint procedure (as described in the Client Rights Policy) will be implemented, if the client desires. The Executive Director will meet with the owner of the service animal within two working days to discuss the investigation and implications of the allegations. If the Executive Director deems that the allegation appears to have legitimacy, the permission for the service animal may be suspended or revoked pending the outcome of the investigation. If the allegation is substantiated, the permission for the Service Animal will be revoked to ensure the safety of all Village House property, persons, and operations.