Service Animals – Sample Policy

This sample agreement should be reviewed and approved by your attorney prior to use.

[Ministry name] is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for those participating in ministry activities, including participants with service animals. We welcome individuals and their service animals on ministry premises.

Service Animal Definition

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a service animal is defined as a dog or miniature horse that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The task(s) performed by the dog or miniature horse must be directly related to the person’s disability. This policy is intended to comply generally with the ADA.* You can review the requirements at https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm.

As permitted by law, ministry leaders may ask individuals with service animals:

• Is the animal required because of a disability?
• What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

A therapy animal is NOT considered a “service animal,” therefore our ministry has chosen not to allow therapy animals on ministry premises. Therapy animals are those that provide comfort just by being with a person. Because they have not been trained to perform a specific job or task, they also do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

Responsibilities of Individuals with Service Animals

• Keep the service animal harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal’s work or the owner’s disability prevents using these devices.
• If the service animal cannot be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, the owner must control the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
• Any damage caused by a service animal is the responsibility of the animal’s owner.

We reserve the right to remove the service animal from ministry premises if it:

• Is out of control and the owner does not take effective action.
• Poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
• Is not housebroken.

If a service animal must be removed from ministry premises, absent other circumstances, the owner can still enter ministry premises and attend ministry activities without the service animal. The ministry does not have to provide care, food, or a special location for the service animal to relieve itself.

(Policy may be acknowledged by service animal owner.)

I have read and understand this policy.

Name: ____________________________________________

Signature: ________________________________________ Date: ____________________

*Note to ministry: While churches and related ministries generally are not required to comply with the ADA’s public accommodation rules, some choose to follow them as best practices. State and local laws may also apply. Ministry leaders should consult with a locally licensed attorney to be sure their policy complies with all applicable laws.

Note: This is a sample document only. Your organization is responsible for compliance with all applicable laws. Accordingly, this sample policy should not be used or adopted by your organization without first being reviewed and approved by an attorney. Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company® assumes no liability in the preparation and distribution of this sample policy.

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