

# Service & Support Animals – Sample Policy

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

*While churches and ministries may not be required to comply with the public accommodation rules set by the Americans with Disability Act, some choose to follow them as best practices. State and local disability laws may also apply. Developing a policy can help your ministry respond to requests fairly, consistently, and legally. Adjust this sample policy to your needs and have a locally licensed attorney confirm that your policy complies with all applicable laws.*

[Church/Ministry name] is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for people who participate in ministry activities, including those who use assistance animals. Please review our guidelines regarding both service and emotional support animals. This policy is intended to comply generally with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

## Service Animals

The ADA defines a service animal 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 service animal must be directly related to the person's disability. We welcome people with service animals on ministry premises. Ministry leaders may ask individuals with service animals a few questions, including:

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

## Emotional Support Animals

An emotional support animal (also known as a comfort animal) provides reassurance just by being with a person. Dogs, cats, birds, hamsters, and many other species can serve as emotional support animals. However, they do not qualify as "service animals" under the ADA.

[Select the statement that represents your organization's position on emotional support animals. Delete the other one.]

- Therefore, our organization has chosen NOT to allow emotional support animals on its premises. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause to you or your family.
- Our organization has chosen to allow emotional support animals on its premises, ONLY if these two conditions are met:
  - o The animal owner has obtained prior approval from a qualified staff member, and
  - o The animal does not pose a threat of harm or disruption to others.

*Please note:* The owners of emotional support animals must comply with the same limitations, restrictions, and requirements as service animal owners, which appear below. Owners that do not uphold these responsibilities may be asked to remove an emotional support animal from the premises.

## Animal Handler's Responsibilities

Individuals who bring a service or emotional support animal onto our premises are expected to:

- Keep the animal harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with an animal's work or an owner's disability prevents them from using these devices.
- Control the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls, if the animal cannot be harnessed, leashed, or tethered.

*(continued)*

*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.*

## Our Organization's Rights

Our organization does not have to provide care, food, or a special location for the service or emotional support animal to relieve itself. We reserve the right to remove an assistance animal from the premises if it:

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

If an assistance animal must be removed from the premises, absent other circumstances, the owner may re-enter the premises and attend church or ministry activities without the service or emotional support animal.

I have read and understand this policy. *(Policy may be acknowledged by animal's handler.)*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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