

YAKIMA COUNTY DISTRICT COURT

POLICY REGARDING SERVICE ANIMALS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Yakima County District Court is committed to making reasonable modifications to its policies, practices, and procedures to permit the use of service animals by people with disabilities. Service animals play an important role in ensuring the independence of people with disabilities, and it is therefore our policy to welcome into the courts any animal that is individually trained to assist a person with a disability.

What is a Service Animal?

Service animals are individually trained to work or perform tasks for individuals with disabilities. Service animals are not always dogs; other animals may assist people with disabilities. Service animals come in all breeds and sizes, may be trained either by an organization or by an individual with a disability, and need not be certified or licensed. Service animals do not always have a harness, a sign, or a symbol indicating that they are service animals. A service animal is not a pet. Service animals assist people with disabilities in many ways, such as:

- Guiding people who are blind or have low vision and retrieving dropped objects for them
- Alerting people who are deaf or hard hearing to sounds and the presence of others.
- Carrying and picking up items, opening doors, or flipping switches for people with disabilities who have limited use of hands or arms, limited use of their legs, or limited ability to bend or stoop.
- Pulling wheelchairs
- Alerting people with disabilities to the onset of medical conditions such as seizures, protecting them and cushioning them if they fall and reviving them.
- Doing work or performing tasks for persons with traumatic brain injury, intellectual disabilities, or psychiatric disabilities, such as reminding a person with depression to take medication or waking him up, helping people with traumatic brain injury to locate misplaced items, or follow daily routines.
- Providing physical support and assisting people with physical disabilities with stability and balance.

Court Employee Responsibilities:

Court employees welcome court users with service animals. Sometimes employees may be responsible for determining if an animal is a service animal. Most of the times, people with disabilities who use service animals may be easily identified without any need for questioning. If you can tell by looking, you should not make the court user feel unwelcome by asking questions.

If you are unsure whether an animal meets the definition of a service animal, one employee and, where necessary, a member of Management may ask the user only one question:

- Is this a service animal required because of a disability?

If the court user says yes or otherwise explains that the animal is required because of a disability, you should welcome the person and service animal into the court. Do not ask any further questions about the customer or his or her service animal. You may not ask a customer questions about his or her disability. You may not ask a customer to show a license, certification, or a special ID card as proof of their animal's training. You must permit service animals to accompany customers with disabilities to all areas of the court normally used by other customers.

All Employees' Responsibilities Regarding Service Animals:

If you have a concern about an animal in a court, contact the District Court Manager. Only a Judicial Officer or Court Manager can make the decision to exclude a service animal, except in the unusual circumstance where a service animal's behavior requires immediate action to prevent imminent injury to others and there is not enough time to contact the Judicial Officer or Court Manager.

Judicial Officer, Court Manager, and ADA Coordinator Responsibilities:

In the event that a particular service animal's vicious behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, the service animal is acting out of control and the owner does not take action to correct its behavior, or in the unlikely event that the court can demonstrate that a particular service animal's conduct fundamentally alters the nature of the court's business, a Judicial Officer or Court Manager has the right to exclude the animal from court at that time. Barking alone is not a direct threat. In addition, a direct threat does not exist if the service animal's owner takes prompt, effective action to control the animal. Moreover, Yakima County District Court will not exclude a particular service animal based on past experience with other animals or based on fear that is not related to a service animal's actual behavior. Each situation will be considered individually. In the event Yakima County District Court excludes a service animal, it will not refuse service to the individual with a disability when he or she is not accompanied by that particular service animal.

Questions/Inquiries/Complaints:

Customers can make complaints per the "Yakima County District Court Grievance Procedure under the Americans with Disabilities Act" which is located on the Court website.

Therese Murphy
District Court Manager
128 N. 2nd Street, Room 225
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(509) 574-1874

Yakima County District Court Kelly Hayes, ADA Contact 128 N. 2 nd St., Room 225 Yakima, WA 98901 (509) 574-1852 Kelly.Hayes@co.yakima.wa.us	District Court – Grandview Raquel Daniel, ADA Contact 1313 W. Wine Country Road Grandview, WA 98930 (509) 882-2921 Raquel.Daniel@co.yakima.wa.us	District Court Probation John Campos 128 N. 2 nd St., Room 200 Yakima, WA 98901 (509) 574-1889 John.Campos@co.yakima.wa.us
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