

The Mountaineers - Service Animals Policy

The Mountaineers recognizes and respects the necessity, value, and importance of service animals to assist individuals with disabilities. Under the Washington Law Against Discrimination, a service animal is defined as any dog or miniature horse 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. The work or tasks performed by the service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. Under the law, use of an animal for protection, safety, emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship does not qualify an animal as a service animal.

It is highly recommended that service animals be pre-registered to attend Mountaineers activities and events, provided that they meet the standards outlined in the following Service Animal Policy. Service animals should be pre-registered with the activity leader for all trips, field trips, and clinics. Trained aides (including service animals) must be considered in the overall party size for each activity. At the time of registration, participants must ensure that there is sufficient space for both themselves and their service animal on the activity roster. The Mountaineers recommends that members create a complimentary profile for their service animal so that they may be directly registered in the activity and more easily accounted for in the overall group size. Please contact info@mountaineers.org for support with creating this profile. Leaders may provide a courtesy notification to other participants that there will be a service animal present at the activity or event.

Service animals must remain under the supervision and control of their owners, and they must comply with individual land manager's rules regarding service animals. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or if the individual's disability prevents the use of these devices. In either of these cases, the individual must maintain control of the service animal through other effective controls such as voice or signal.

When can service animals be excluded?

The Mountaineers is not required to accommodate a service animal if accommodation would "fundamentally" alter the nature of the program or overrule legitimate safety requirements. In addition, a person may be asked to remove their service animal from the program if: (1) the animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it or, (2) the animal is not housebroken. Any behavior or actions that constitute a risk to property or others may also be grounds for refusal.

If you believe the presence of a service animal would compromise your program's safety, please contact Mountaineers staff at info@mountaineers.org before denying the service animal's participation.

When there is a legitimate reason to ask that a service animal be removed from a Mountaineers program, Mountaineers staff and/or volunteers must offer the person with the disability the

opportunity to continue his or her participation without the animal's presence - so long as the participant is able to continue meeting the relevant [Essential Eligibility Criteria](#) for that activity.

Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service animals.

If a Mountaineers activity is not suitable for service animals, please consider the following:

- The owner may leave the service animal at home. Owners may not leave their service animal unattended at a Mountaineers property.
- In some instances, the owner may leave the service animal with a trained aide who is attending the activity, with the understanding that the trained aide will not participate in the given activity. The service animal may not be left with a Mountaineers staff member or volunteer.
- The owner may choose to participate in an alternate activity, if available.
- The owner may decide not to participate in the given activity.

At absolutely no time will any Mountaineers staff member or volunteer be responsible for the control and/or supervision of a participant's service animal.

How does The Mountaineers determine if an animal is a service animal?

Under the law, staff and volunteers may only ask two specific questions about a participant's service animal: (1) is the animal a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the animal been trained to perform. These questions may help staff or volunteers better differentiate between a service animal and an emotional support, therapy, comfort, or companion animal. Staff and volunteers may not ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the animal, or ask that the animal demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

Any person found to be misrepresenting a service animal by a qualified enforcement official may be asked to remove the animal from the property and may be subject to a civil infraction.

The Mountaineers empowers leaders to have these conversations directly with participants. If the leader is unsure of the circumstances or has concerns about the service animal's participation in a Mountaineers program, they should contact Mountaineers staff for support.

Are service animals allowed at Mountaineers lodges?

Service animals are permitted in all Mountaineers properties, including our three public lodges. Guests with a disability who use a service animal must be provided the same opportunity to stay in any available bed, and they may not be restricted to "pet-friendly" rooms or areas of the lodge. In addition, guests with service animals may not be charged an additional fee for cleaning the hair or dander shed by a service animal. If a guest's service animal causes damages to the property, the lodge is permitted to charge the same fee for damages as would be charged to other guests.

Guests may not leave their service animal unattended in the lodge, and the service animal must be under the handler's control at all times. The Mountaineers is not required to provide service animals with water or food, or to allow service animals on the furniture, unless necessary for the service animal to perform its work or task.