

Richmond Memorial Library	Section:
Manual Name: Library Policy Manual	Date Effective: 6/22/2023
Section: Animals in the Library	Date Created/Revised: 6/23

The Richmond Memorial Library recognizes that some patrons may have service animals which are trained to assist or accommodate a person with a sensory, mental, or physical disability, or to perform tasks for the benefit of a disabled individual. RML recognizes legal rights under the applicable federal and state laws regarding use of service animals. RML also considers the safety and health of all of its patrons, the public, and the library staff to be of utmost priority.

Statement of Policy

No animals other than service animals (dogs or miniature horses) are allowed in the RML. Persons bringing in animals other than service animals will be asked to remove them. This includes emotional support, therapy, comfort, or companion animals.

Individuals with service animals may bring those animals into all areas of the library where members of the public are normally allowed to go. All service animals must be under the full custody and control of their handler at all times. Also, service animals must be on a leash or harness at all times unless the handler is unable to leash or harness the animal because of a disability or interference with the performance of task(s). If the service animal cannot be leashed or harnessed, it must otherwise be under the handler’s control (e.g. voice control, signals, or other effective means). Owners of the service animals are solely responsible for the supervision and care of the animal while on library property. Owners must keep the service animals with them at all times.

Service animals are not required to be licensed or certified by a state or local government or training program, or be identified by a special harness or collar. As such, individuals with a service animal may not be asked to provide documentation of a disability or authorized use of a service animal.

Staff may ask two questions:

1. Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What specific work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

Owners of service animals, or service animals in training will indicate that they are working animals and not pets. Terms used may include assistance, service, guide, hearing, or helping animal. Staff may not ask about the owner’s disability.

A person with a disability may not be asked to remove their service animal from the library unless the presence, behavior, or actions of the animal constitutes an unreasonable risk of injury or harm to property or other persons, or the animal is disruptive and the owner does not take effective action to control it. In these cases, library staff must give the person with the disability the option to obtain library services without having the service animal on the premises. Fear of allergies, annoyances on the part of other patrons or employees, or fear of animals are not permissible reasons for denying access or for refusing library service to people with a service animal.

Exceptions for Library Offerings

Pending approval by the Director or his/her designee, the Library may have animals in the buildings as part of its education and recreational offerings.

Animal Endangerment

RML does not condone leaving non-service animals outside the library in a way that may endanger the animal or Library patrons. RML reserves the right to contact the police regarding unattended animals on its premises.

Definitions

Service animal: Any dog or miniature horse trained to do work or to perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Examples of such work or tasks include: guiding people who are blind; alerting people who are deaf; pulling a wheelchair; calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder during an anxiety attack; or performing other duties. Animals whose sole purpose is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Disability: The term “disability” means, with respect to an individual:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual;
- A record of such an impairment; or
- Being regarded as having such an impairment.

If an individual meets any one of these three tests, he or she is considered to be an individual with a disability for purposes covered under the ADA.

Misrepresenting an animal as a service animal is a violation of the library's Patron Code of Conduct, and may result in suspension of library privileges.

Observing the above helps make the library a safe, clean and friendly place for the entire community. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

All patrons bringing a service animal into the library must do their best to prevent their animal from urinating or defecating in the building. Should the therapy animal create a mess, the patron must thoroughly clean up after the animal. Anyone not doing so will be subject to suspension from the library.

Approved by Board:
6/21/2023