



CITY OF PROVIDENCE

2.9 ANIMALS IN THE WORKPLACE

Purpose

This policy outlines guidelines for employees regarding the presence of animals in the workplace. As organizations increasingly recognize the benefits of animal-assisted environments for employee well-being and productivity, this policy ensures a balanced approach to maintain a safe, comfortable, and compliant work environment for all employees. While also ensuring compliance with both Rhode Island's human rights laws and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, interns, fellows, and volunteers engaged by the City of Providence.

Nothing in this policy shall supersede, modify, or diminish any rights, benefits, or obligations contained within applicable collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) or laws. In the event of a conflict between this policy and a CBA, the CBA shall prevail for covered employees. For all other employees not covered by a CBA, this policy shall govern.

Definitions

Municipal Facilities: refer to any municipal building and other individual workspaces including parking lots, grounds, vehicles and common areas. Municipal property that the general public are permitted to bring service or emotional support animals to, such as unposted parks and open spaces, are excluded from this policy when used by employees on non-work time.

Service Animals: refers to animals used to guide or provide assistance to people with disabilities in the activities of independent living. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Service Animals are defined as an animal that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guide dogs, signal dogs or other dogs individually trained to do work or person tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.

Emotional Support Animals: refers to an animal that is prescribed or otherwise documented by a healthcare or mental health professional as treatment for an individual with a disability. The support animal provides emotional or other support that improve one or more identified symptoms or effects or a person's disability. Unlike service animals, support animals are not required to be trained to perform work or tasks.

Policy

It is City policy to permit the public and employees for Service Animals to accompany people with disabilities. For the general public the City does not require documentation of the Service Animal. However, if it is not readily apparent that an animal is a service animal, staff may make inquiries to determine whether the animal qualifies as a service animal, which considers:

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

1. Approval Process

- A. Employees who wish to bring animals to the workplace must obtain prior approval from the Department of People and Culture.



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- B. Requests for animals in the workplace should be submitted to the Director of Occupational Safety & Health Administration, in writing and should specify the type of animal, their role (e.g., therapy animal, service animal), and any specific needs or accommodations.
- C. Requests are subject to the Interactive Process. Approval is granted on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the ADA and can be revoked at any time if concerns arise about safety, allergies, or disruption. This does not apply to animals that employees work with as their job requires.

2. **Service Animals**

- A. Employees with disabilities are permitted to bring service animals to the workplace in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or relevant local laws, subject to making a reasonable accommodation request and undergoing the interactive process.
- B. Service animals must be under control and on a leash or harness at all times. Employees are responsible for the care and supervision of their service animals.

3. **Therapy and Emotional Support Animals**

- A. Therapy animals or emotional support animals may be permitted on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the provisions of the ADA and are subject to the interactive process.
- B. Documentation from a licensed mental health professional may be required to verify the need for the animal.
- C. Employees are encouraged to provide advance notice of at least two weeks before bringing such animals to the workplace.

4. **Employee responsibilities for service or ESA Animals**

A. **Animal Behavior and Control:**

- 1. Animals in the workplace must be well-behaved, clean, and free from any disease.
- 2. Aggressive or disruptive behavior (e.g., barking, biting, excessive noise) will not be tolerated, and animals may be asked to leave the workplace.
- 3. Animals should not roam freely and must remain within the employee's workspace and control or in designated animal-friendly areas.

B. **Health and Safety Considerations:**

- 1. Employees must ensure their animals are up-to-date on vaccinations, flea/tick treatments, and grooming. In this instance we may request documentation to ensure the safety of other employees in the workplace.
- 2. Employees with allergies or phobias may request accommodations, such as relocation or designated "animal-free" zones. Efforts will be made to balance the needs of all employees.

C. **Cleaning and Hygiene:**

- 1. Employees must maintain cleanliness and hygiene, ensuring their animals do not create an unsanitary environment. Employees should promptly clean up after their animals and dispose of waste properly.
- 2. The workplace will provide designated areas for walking animals and disposing of waste.

D. **Liability:**

Employees are responsible for their animals' actions and may be liable for injuries or damage caused by the animals in the workplace.

E. **Insurance:**

If an employee brings an animal to work, they must carry appropriate insurance or provide proof of coverage that addresses potential liabilities associated with the animal's presence in the workplace.



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5. **Allergy or Medical Concerns**

Employees with allergies or health concerns related to animals may request accommodations. The City will make reasonable efforts to ensure that individuals with allergies or health conditions are not unduly affected.

6. **Complaint Process**

1. If you have a complaint related to this policy, please contact the Department of People and Culture – Employee Experience.
2. Any employee who believes that they have been discriminated against by this policy may, either by phone, sending a written complaint or by going to the Agency in person, also contact:

US Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Civil Rights Division
Disability Rights Section- NYA
Washington, DC, 20503
800-514-0301

3. Any employee who believes that they have been discriminated against can also reach out to the:

RI Commission for Human Rights
180 Westminster St #201
Providence, RI 02903
[\(401\) 222-2662](tel:4012222662)

7. **Compliance**

Any violations of this policy should be reported to the Department of People and Culture or management. Depending on the severity of the violation, corrective actions may include removal of the animal from the workplace, warnings, or other disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Related Policies:

Whistleblower – Anti-Retaliation Policy
Discipline Policy
Code of Conduct
Workplace Cleanliness Policy
ADA and Reasonable Accommodation Policy

Other Related Information:

Local 1033 [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)