

## **Taxicabs and Service Animals in Cambridge**

### ***FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS***

**I heard that the definition of service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) recently changed. What is the new definition?**

Effective March 15, 2011, the definition of service animal for the purpose of protection against discrimination under the ADA is restricted to *dogs* who are "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." Thus, other species, regardless of whether or not trained to perform specific tasks, no longer meet the definition of service animal.

**How does this change things for me as a taxicab driver?**

This new definition will help you clarify what animals you're required to allow in your cab, and which animals you're allowed to refuse. Prior to this change, persons with disabilities were allowed to use animals other than dogs (such as monkeys) as service animals in public places, including taxicabs. Therefore, you may now refuse to transport somebody if they have an animal other than a dog, even if the person says that it is a service animal.

**How do I know if a dog is really a service animal? Can I require identification?**

Some, but not all service animals wear identifying equipment, such as a special harness, collar or vest. However, it is illegal to require any type of identification proving that a dog is a service animal. Instead, if it is not obvious that a dog is trained to perform specific tasks for an individual with a disability, you may ask the following three questions:

1. Do you have a disability?
2. Is your dog a service animal?
3. What tasks is your dog trained to perform?

You are not allowed to ask a person questions about what their disability is, and keep in mind that a lot of disabilities are "hidden"—for example, you can't tell by looking at a person if they have a seizure disorder.

## What happens if I refuse to allow a service dog in my cab?

Individuals with disabilities who are refused a ride in a taxicab because they use a service animal may file a complaint with the Cambridge License Commission, which will conduct a disciplinary hearing and may issue a fine or suspend the driver.

## What if I'm allergic to dogs?

If you have an allergy to dogs that is so severe that it will impair your ability to function and drive, you must:

1. Provide the Cambridge License Commission with a letter from your doctor documenting your allergy as soon as it is diagnosed, *and*
2. Have a partition installed in your taxicab.

Because the partition will limit your exposure to dog dander, service animals may not be refused a ride even if you are allergic.

## Who can I contact if I have more questions?

You may contact the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities at 617-349-4692 with any questions relating to serving customers with disabilities.

The New England ADA Center can also answer questions about the ADA, including service animals. Their phone number is 1-800-949-4232.

This **FACT SHEET** is one in a series of technical assistance bulletins provided as a public service by:

### **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities**



51 Inman Street, Cambridge, MA, 02139  
617-349-4692 (Voice), 617-492-0235 (TTY), 617-349-4766 (Fax)  
[www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm](http://www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm)

Revised 6/28/2011