

## Service Animals

### ***Policy:***

The Children and Adult Rural Transportation Service (CARTS), a program of the Columbia County Community Healthcare Consortium, Inc., is committed to providing safe and accessible transportation for all passengers. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals with disabilities are permitted to travel with their service animals in all company vehicles and in all facilities, including those with a "no pets" policy. Staff will provide respectful and courteous service to passengers with disabilities and their service animals.

### **Definition of a Service Animal**

Under Department of Transportation (DOT) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.3, "service animal" is defined as "any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items." DOT ADA regulation 49 C.F.R. Section 37.167(d) requires transit entities to permit service animals to accompany individuals with disabilities in vehicles and facilities.

Animals whose sole function is to provide emotional support or comfort are *not* considered service animals under DOT ADA regulations and transit agencies are not required to accommodate them.

### ***Procedures:***

#### **Permitted inquiries**

The permitted inquiries related to service animals are limited. If it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, staff may only ask two questions:

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

Staff **cannot** ask for any special written identification, certification, or ask about the person's disability.

## Handler Responsibilities and Animal Behavior

- The service animal must be **under the control** of its handler at all times. Control of the animal can be verbal and does not necessarily involve a leash or harness. In some cases, a service animal may be trained to provide assistance without a leash or harness.
- The animal must be **housebroken**.
- More than one service animal may accompany a rider on a single trip. Different service animals may provide different services to a rider during trips or at the rider's destination.
- The animal may be excluded if it is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it, or if it poses a **direct threat** to the health or safety of others (e.g., uncontrolled barking, growling at other customers, or jumping on people).

## Transportation Provider Responsibilities

- **Drivers are not required** to take the leash or harness of a service animal. As a customer service, a driver could choose to provide this assistance when requested (for example, by a rider using a wheelchair who also uses a service animal), but FTA has stated that such a request may be denied because caring for a service animal is the responsibility of the rider or a personal care attendant.
- **No additional fees** can be charged for a person traveling with a service animal.
- The person and animal **cannot be forced to sit in a particular spot** or segregated from other customers.
- **Advance notice** is not required, but advising the scheduler of the use of a service animal ahead of time can be helpful.
- Service cannot be denied due to another person's allergies.