

Webinar Recording

- Recorded on February 24, 2026
- [Watch the Video](#)
- [ASPeN Event](#)

Purpose of the Webinar

The training, led by Emily Shuman of the Rocky Mountain ADA Center, was designed to help public library staff understand ADA requirements related to service animals, what questions staff may ask, how to distinguish service animals from emotional-support or therapy animals, and how to confidently navigate real-world interactions.

Quick Reference for Staff

What You Can Ask

Only When the Disability/Task Is Not Obvious

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

These are the only questions permitted.

What You Cannot Ask

- No documentation, certification, registration, ID cards, or vests
- No medical or personal questions
- No demonstration of the task
- No breed or training source questions

Allow the Service Animal If:

- The animal is a dog or miniature horse
- The handler provides credible verbal assurance (answers the two questions)
- The animal behaves appropriately
- The animal is under control (leash or effective voice control)

When You May Ask the Animal to Leave

(But the person must still be allowed to stay.)

- Animal is not housebroken
- Out of control and handler does not correct it
- Animal is aggressive, threatening, or damaging property
- Animal causes a fundamental alteration to a program

Access and Usability Series

Service Animals

February 24, 2026



Behavior to Watch For

- Calm, focused, controlled movement
- No barking, lunging, wandering, or blocking walkways
- Responds to handler commands

Behavior—not gear—is your strongest indicator.

If the Patron Refuses to Answer the Two Questions

- You may deny entry to the animal
- The patron is still welcome without the animal

Montana Specific Note

- Service animals in training must wear visible identification (vest, leash, harness, or backpack labeled “service animal in training,” visible from 20 feet).

Safety & Liability Tips

- Do not take custody or control of the animal
- For vaccination or safety concerns, contact animal control (don't ask for documents)
- Document incidents where an animal is removed

Core Principle

If the animal is trained to perform tasks and behaves appropriately, it is allowed. If it is not under control or not housebroken, it is not.

Key Resources

- [Rocky Mountain ADA Center](#)
 - Free, confidential technical assistance on any ADA question.
 - Website + pocket guides, posters, short videos, social media content.
- [Federal ADA Guidance on Service Animals](#)
- [Montana State Law on Service Animals](#)
 - Montana Code Annotated resources were shared and reaffirm federal definitions with added provisions for animals in training.

Questions?

[Corey Sloan](#), MSL Consultant

Detailed Summary

1. Definitions & Legal Foundations

Service Animal (ADA Definition)

A service animal is only:

- A **dog** or
- A **miniature horse** that is **individually trained to do work or perform tasks** for a person with a disability.

Training—not species, size, or gear—is the defining factor. Examples of trained tasks include guiding, retrieving items, allergen detection, interrupting behaviors, mobility support, or medical alerting.

Not Service Animals

- Emotional support animals
- Comfort animals
- Therapy animals

These animals may provide benefits but **are not trained to perform tasks**, and therefore **do not have public-access rights** under the ADA. Libraries are not required to allow them.

Civil Rights Context

The ADA is a federal civil rights law requiring equal access and reasonable policy modifications. Public libraries must generally allow service animals anywhere the public can go.

2. The Only Two Questions Library Staff May Ask

When a disability or task is *not obvious*, staff may ask only:

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

Staff **may not** ask:

- For proof of disability
- For training certificates
- For medical documentation
- About the person's diagnosis
- For the animal to demonstrate the task
- For registration, vests, or ID cards (all of which can be fraudulent)

If a person **refuses to answer the two questions**, the library may deny entry to the **animal**, not the person.

3. Behavioral Requirements & When You *May* Ask an Animal to Leave

A legitimate service animal must:

- Be housebroken
- Be **under the handler's control** at all times (leash, tether, or effective verbal control)
- Not bark, growl, lunge, or disturb others
- Not damage property
- Meet local vaccination/licensing rules (though staff should call animal control rather than ask for proof directly)

An animal may be removed (but the person must still be allowed to remain) if:

- It is out of control, and the handler does not correct it
- It is not housebroken
- It poses a **direct threat** (e.g., aggression)
- It causes a **fundamental alteration** to a program (e.g., a dog in a kitten-reading program)

4. Service Animals in Training

Under federal ADA:

- "Service animals in training" are **not** covered.

Under Montana law:

Service animals in training **are allowed** similar access **if** they wear visible identification (vest, leash, harness, or backpack labeled "service animal in training," visible from 20 feet).

5. Multiple Animals, No Breed Restrictions, & Training

Source

- Patrons may have **more than one service animal** when each performs different tasks.
- **Any dog breed** may be a service animal.
- Service animals may be trained **by the handler**, not necessarily by professionals. Most are owner-trained due to long waitlists and high costs of professional programs.

6. Allergies and Fear of Dogs

- **Mild allergies or fear of dogs are not grounds** for excluding a service animal.
- If both patrons have disabilities (e.g., severe asthma vs. service dog), staff should make case-by-case attempts to accommodate both (e.g., separate seating, different timing).

7. Fraud, Misrepresentation & Common Abuse of the Law

Montana law makes **intentional misrepresentation** of a service animal a misdemeanor after a warning, though it is rarely enforced.

The presenter emphasized focusing on **observable behavior**, not gear or claims, because:

- Fraudulent vests and ID cards are widely sold online.
- Anyone can memorize answers to the two questions.

- Behavioral standards (control, calmness, housebreaking) reveal legitimacy far more reliably.