

## Are You Looking for a Service Therapy Dog?

Each year PFH receives queries regarding dogs to serve as helpmates for people with mental and emotional disorders. The following information may be useful for locating groups that provide this service. However, the information or referrals given do not in any way constitute legal advice regarding either ADA law or service animals protected under American Disabilities Act (ADA).

## What is a Medical Service Dog

Paws for Healing does not train canines to perform a medical service for individuals under a doctor's care for psychological or emotional trauma or for mental challenges such as depression, autism, agoraphobia or PTSD. These dogs have also been referred to as companion dogs or therapy dogs. PFH, however, distinguishes this type of working canine as a "Medical Service Dog" to avoid confusion with pet dogs that provide physical, emotional or social comfort to patients in health care or people in educational settings.

## Where to find a Medical Service Dog

If you are looking for a canine to mediate your medical condition and you have a physician's referral, you may qualify for a medical service canine that is protected by ADA protections. Any individual who qualifies for a medical service canine is afforded all the rights that are normally given to Guide Dogs and their owners.

Service dogs include (but are not limited to)

- Guide Dogs for people with sight-impairments
- Hearing or Signal Dogs for people with hearing deficits
- Assistance Dogs for people with physical challenges
- Seizure Dogs for people who have epilepsy
- Medical Service Dogs for people with psychological or mental disabilities

## Referrals and Service Dog Providers

There are many organizations throughout the US that now train and provide service dogs for individuals. One national listing is: [www.wolfpacks.com/serviced.htm](http://www.wolfpacks.com/serviced.htm)

You may contact these individual groups for further information about their programs and satellite organizations throughout the US:

Assistance Dog Institute (ADI) [www.assistancedog.org](http://www.assistancedog.org)

Canine Companions for Independence (CCI) [www.caninecompanions.org](http://www.caninecompanions.org) and [www.caninecompanions.org/national/our\\_regions.html](http://www.caninecompanions.org/national/our_regions.html)

Delta Society [www.deltasociety.org](http://www.deltasociety.org)

Paws'itive Teams [www.pawsteams.org](http://www.pawsteams.org)

San Francisco SPCA (signal dog program) [www.sfspca.org](http://www.sfspca.org)

ADA regulations also allow people to obtain and train their own canines. For further clarification on this and the protections afforded by ADA, go to the US Department of Justice web site: [www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm)

### Certification and Proof for an ADA Canine

Health issues are confidential under ADA and preclude anyone from asking why a person has a service dog. Business owners may only ask whether or not the canine is a pet for clarification of the dog's status. Service dogs are not considered "pets." While no one technically has to prove the canine is a service dog, many service dog owners prefer to have an identifying uniform or tags so as not to engage in possible intrusive questioning or confrontations.

Please note, however, that misrepresentation of a pet as a service dog is a misdemeanor and is punishable by law.

There are several uniform production companies that make supplies for service dogs. Among those PFH can recommend are:

R. H. Jelf [www.servicedogequipment.com](http://www.servicedogequipment.com)

The Raspberry Field: [www.raspberryfield.com](http://www.raspberryfield.com)

For identification tags, PFH can recommend:

[http://www.servicedogtags.com/service\\_dog\\_tags.htm](http://www.servicedogtags.com/service_dog_tags.htm)