

**Animals in the Library Policy**

**1. Purpose**

Ritzville Library District #2 recognizes that patrons with disabilities may have service animals that are trained to assist or accommodate a person with a sensory, mental or physical disability or to perform tasks for the benefit of a disabled individual. The Library recognizes legal rights under federal and state laws regarding use of service animals. The Library also considers the safety and health of all its patrons, the public, and library staff to be of utmost priority.

**2. Background and Definitions**

- a. Service Animals: Animals that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act). Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with a mental illness to take prescribed medication, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack or performing other duties. Animals whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.
- b. Disability: The term “disability” means, with respect to an individual:
  - i. A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual;
  - ii. A record of such an impairment; or
  - iii. Being regarded as having such an impairment

If an individual meets any of these three criteria, he or she is considered to be an individual with a disability for purposes of coverage under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- c. Substitute House Bill (SHB) 2822 amended RCW chapter 49.60 effective January 1, 2019. The purpose of the new law is to penalize the intentional misrepresentation of a service animal, which delegitimizes the genuine need for the use of service animals and makes it harder for persons with disabilities to gain unquestioned acceptance for their legitimate, properly trained, and essential service animals. Under the new law, the definition of service animal now eliminates animals other than dogs or miniature horses and excludes animals whose purpose is to provide comfort or emotional support.

**3. Policy**

- a. No pets or animals other than service animals or service animals in training are allowed in the library. Owners of pets will be asked to remove them from the library.

## Ritzville Library District #2

- b.** Individuals may bring their service animals into all areas of the library where members of the public are normally allowed to go. All service animals must be under full custody and control of their handler at all times. Owners of service animals are solely responsible for the supervision and care of their animal and must keep their animal directly with them at all times.
- c.** Service animals are not required to be licensed or certified by a state or local government or training program, or be identified by a special harness or collar.
- d.** Staff may ask two questions: (1) Is the service animal required because of a disability, and (2) What work or task has the animal been trained to perform. Staff may not ask about the owner's disability.
- e.** A person with a service animal may not be asked to remove their animal from the library unless the presence, behavior or actions of the animal constitutes an unreasonable risk of injury or harm to property or other persons or if the animal is disruptive and the owner does not take effective action to control it. In these cases, library staff must give the person with the disability the option to obtain library services without having their animal on the premises. Fear of allergies, annoyance on the part of other patrons or staff or fear of dogs are generally not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people with service animals.

#### **4. Citations and Related References**

- a.** Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II, Section 35.136, Service Animals
- b.** RCW 49.60.218, Use of Dog Guide or Service Animal