

UUSB Animal Policy
Adopted January, 2003
Reviewed 2014

Even though religious organizations are not required to allow service dogs in their facilities, UUSB endeavors to be welcoming and accommodating to all persons. The following guidelines indicate what is expected of a person bringing a service dog into the church, and what is expected of members of the congregation in helping to make the experience positive for everyone involved.

With the exception of service dogs, the presence of animals (e.g., pet dogs and cats) in the church building shall be limited to special occasions, organized and supervised by members of the church.

Service dogs shall have free access to the building. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. Dogs that are not trained to perform tasks that mitigate the effects of a disability, including dogs that are used purely for emotional support, are not service animals. UUSB and any group renting this facility will have the right to exclude any service animal when the animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. UUSB and anyone renting this facility shall have the right to automatically exclude an animal and owner from the premises if the animal disrupts the normal course of business by barking and/or being aggressive in any way. Under the MAINE REVISED STATUTES, Title 5: ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND SERVICES, Part 12: HUMAN RIGHTS, Chapter 337: HUMAN RIGHTS ACT, Subchapter 5: PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS, Section 8. SERVICE ANIMALS, "For any public accommodation or any person who is the owner, lessor, lessee, proprietor, operator, manager, superintendent, agent or employee of any place of public accommodation to refuse to permit the use of a service animal or otherwise discriminate against an individual with a physical or mental disability who uses a service animal at the public accommodation ***unless*** it is shown by defense that the service animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others or the use of the service animal would result in substantial physical damage to the property of others or would substantially interfere with the reasonable enjoyment of the public accommodation by others."

We are only permitted to ask the animal owner what tasks the animal is trained to perform that the human handler cannot do for themselves. We are not permitted to ask for information about the specific nature of the person's disability or other invasive questions. If an animal is not trained to perform tasks to mitigate the handler's disability, then it isn't a service animal under the ADA. Types of service dogs include dogs for the blind, hearing and signal dogs for the hearing impaired, and assistance dogs that help by picking things up, pulling wheelchairs, etc.

On UUSB premises, the service dog shall remain on the floor, adjacent to the person responsible. The service dog shall be kept on a leash, off the furniture, and under control of the individual using the dog. Regarding food service areas, common sense shall prevail, with consideration given to the guided person's right to utilize their dog to maintain independence and mobility.

The person bringing the service dog into the church building shall be financially responsible for any damage caused by the animal. It is expected that the person bringing the animal into the building will inform the minister or church officers of any safety issues, special considerations, or dangers the animal may pose to children or adults in attendance, so that these concerns can be addressed and shared with the congregation when appropriate. Since a service dog is a working dog, members of the congregation should not seek verbal or physical contact with the dog by beckoning or calling, or attempting to engage the dog in play, and should not pet the dog.