

Animal Policy

Introduction

In order to ensure safety, wellbeing, and equitable access of the Walter E. Olson Memorial Library (“OML” or “the Library”) patrons and staff, the Board of Trustees has adopted the following policy regarding animals on Library grounds and inside the Library facility. OML recognizes legal rights under federal and state laws regarding use of service animals, and this policy was developed with reference to [the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (the “ADA”) and [Wisconsin State Statute 106.52](#).

Policy

Animals may never be left unattended on library grounds. Additionally, all animals are prohibited from entering library facilities, with the following exceptions:

1. animals featured in programs sponsored by OML,
2. animals being used for law enforcement purposes, and
3. service animals and service animal in training (hereafter referred to as “service animals”) that require accommodation under the ADA. *More information regarding services animals in the Library can be found below.*

Service Animals

Under [Wisconsin State Statute 106.52\(1\)\(fm\)](#), “‘Service animal’ means a guide dog, signal dog, or other animal that is **individually trained or is being trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability**, including the work or task of guiding a person with impaired vision, alerting a person with impaired hearing to intruders or sound, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.”

Emotional support, therapy, comfort, or companion animals do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

1. Individuals with disabilities may bring their service animals into all areas of the library where members of the public are normally allowed to go.
2. By ADA regulation, service animals must be under the immediate control of their handlers at all times. Therefore, service animals which are not housebroken, are uncontrolled, or are otherwise disruptive will be required to leave the premises. The owner may return without the animal.
3. Fear of allergies, annoyance on the part of other patrons or employees, or fear of animals are generally not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people with service animals.
4. If it is not obvious that an animal brought into the library is a service animal, a staff member may ask the following questions:
 - a. Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
 - b. What specific work or task has the animal been trained to perform?
5. **Staff members may not ask about the nature of a person's disability.**

6. Users of service animals are not required to show certification or licensing documentation, to prove a disability.
7. Service animals are not required to wear a special harness, collar, or otherwise identifying “uniforms”.
8. Misrepresenting an animal as a service animal may result in suspension of library privileges.

Emotional Support Animals

State and Federal Laws do not recognize emotional support animals or comfort animals as service animals and the status of an emotional support animal as a service animal is not recognized by OML.

However, OML recognizes that emotional support animals (ESAs) play a valid role in the lives of their owners. Emotional support animals may be permitted inside the OML facility **only with the advance approval of the Library Director**. The owner of an emotional support animal should request the approval for the animal to be granted access to OML **in writing**. Permission for ESAs will not be granted the same day as a request submission, so please do not bring any animal to the Library in advance of permission being granted.

A successful request will:

1. contain the name and contact information of the owner and user of the ESA,
2. contain a description, valid license, and immunization record for the animal as required by local and state regulations, and
3. provide official documentation from a licensed medical or mental health professional on their professional letterhead verifying that the person listed in the letter is under the care of the assessing physician or mental health professional and that the animal is required for emotional support or as a psychiatric service.

Violation of this Policy

The Board of Trustees is committed to the equitable use and accessibility of the Library for all of its patrons. Any person who feels their ability to use the Library has been compromised due to a failure to uphold this policy should report such grievances to the Director.

Individuals in violation of this policy will be asked to remove the animal from the Library and may have their Library privileges suspended. OML staff will take appropriate action, up to and including contacting relevant external agencies, to ensure the safety and well-being of its users. The Library staff will fill out a written incident report documenting violations of this policy. A copy of this report will be submitted to the Library Director immediately following an incident for determination of additional actions.