

# Service Animals in Labs

## Description

## Purpose

UF's Division of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S), in consultation with the Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity and the Disability Resource Center, has developed this guidance to ensure the safety of faculty, staff, students, and service animals in teaching and research laboratories.

## Scope

This guidance applies to University staff and students with conditions or disabilities (permanent or temporary) that need a service dog. This guidance is to be used in conjunction with University of Florida regulation 6C1-2.021 [Animals Not Allowed in Buildings](#) and the UF [IACUC Policy on Unauthorized Animals in Animal Housing/Research Space at UF](#) along with [guidance provided by the UF ADA Compliance office](#).

Service animals are defined by the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division as dogs trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. In addition to dogs, the ADA now has separate regulations about miniature horses that have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.

Service animals are working animals and not pets or comfort animals. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA. If not readily apparent that a service animal is trained to do work/perform tasks, University employees can ONLY as two questions:

- Is the service animal required because of a disability?
- What work/task is the service animal trained to perform?

## Potential Hazards to Service Animals

UF research labs have a multitude of hazards that pose a risk to service animals. Students who require the use of a service animal assume all risk in utilizing the service animal while attending classroom activities or conducting research within UF labs. Hazards mitigation strategies must be conveyed by the Principal Investigator (PI) to the student to determine how the student and animal may safely work in the research lab. Jointly, EH&S and the Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity may also assist in a risk assessment for specific labs.

Examples of potential hazards or impacts to research include (not an exhaustive list):

- Chemical exposure due to spills and heavier than air vapors/gasses.
- Liquified gases which are heavier than air and expand to create an oxygen deficient environment.
- Broken glass or dropped glassware
- High noise environments which require the use of hearing protection.
- Moving equipment or pinch points that can injure the service animal
- Biological materials which may be hazardous to the service animal's health or that can be transported outside of the lab by the animal
- Risk of exposure or contamination with radioactive materials
- Laser radiation from class 3b to 4 lasers.

## Risk Assessment and Safety Requirements

The following section details considerations that must be evaluated when allowing a service animal to enter research or teaching laboratories.

A risk assessment is necessary prior to granting service dogs access to a UF lab. Contact EH&S or the Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity to conduct a risk assessment prior to granting access. The following questions may be evaluated when conducting a risk assessment:

- What services will the animal provide during the lab?
- Is there an acceptable alternative way of providing those services during the lab?
- How does the service animal interact with and/or alert its partner?

- What are the potential hazards found in the lab?
- What areas of the lab are safe or potentially hazardous for the service animal?
- What protective equipment and/or clothing is required for access?
- What emergency procedures are needed for the service animal and its partner?
- Are there alternatives to locating the service animal in the lab next to the individual? Alternatives may include:
  - A fenced off area within the lab but away from the lab bench.
  - An adjacent non-lab room.
  - A portable kennel outside of the lab.
- What is necessary to minimize or prevent impact to other personnel in the lab?
- Will the presence of the service animal impact teaching or ongoing research?

Based on these questions, some minimum requirements must be met for allowing service dogs in labs:

- The handler, not the University, is responsible for the service animal's care and supervision.
- The handler must keep the service animal under control in public areas – via a harness, leash, tether, or voice control if a harness, leash, or other tether interferes with the service animal's performance.
- When in a lab, service animals must be placed on a disposable, plastic-backed paper mat (a.k.a. a bench paper or "chux") to protect the service animal from contact with potential contamination on the floor.
- The service animal must be house broken. If an accident occurs, owners are responsible for cleanup and disposal of vomit, urine and feces.
- The service animals must not vocalize, bark, or growl inappropriately. If the service animal is trained to alert by vocalizing, the instructor and staff must be aware of the circumstances under which the service animal would vocalize. Disruptive, extended vocalizing or barking will not be permitted, unless in proper context.
- The service animal may not engage in behavior that endangers the health or safety of others. The service animal must not behave aggressively towards other people (snapping, snarling, growling, charging, swiping, etc.). The service animal must not jump up on other people.
- Areas which require personnel to wear PPE extend to the service animal. Examples of PPE requirements and products include:
  - Protective Eyewear (Goggles): <https://www.rexspecks.com/>
  - Foot Protection (Booties): <https://muttluks.com/>
  - Disposable Lab Coats (Covering): None commercially available specific to dogs. [Maytex](#) lab coats may be used.
- Laboratories Utilizing Biological Materials: a risk assessment must be completed by EH&S's Biosafety Office prior to allowing service animals access to laboratories where biological agents are use.
- Laboratories Utilizing Radioactive Materials: a risk assessment must be completed by EH&S's Radiation Safety Office prior to allowing service animals access to labs where radioactive materials and radiation producing devices are used.
- Animal Housing or Animal Research Space: Per IACUC's policy, no unauthorized animals are

allowed to enter any housing area (ACS or non-ACS facility) or area where animals are used in covered IACUC research. Personnel may request a risk assessment from EH&S and approval from the IACUC for a possible exception.

- Patient Facing Clinical Research: obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to allowing service animals access to areas where clinical research occurs.

## **Contacts and Resources**

### **[Service Animals in Labs.docx](#)**

#### **Environmental Health & Safety**

Biosafety Office: [bsso@ehs.ufl.edu](mailto:bsso@ehs.ufl.edu)

Lab Safety Office: [labsafety@ehs.ufl.edu](mailto:labsafety@ehs.ufl.edu)

Phone: ( 352 ) 392-1591

#### **UF Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity**

[Click here](#) to access the website

Phone: ( 352 ) 273-1094

#### **UF Disability Resource Center**

[Click here](#) to access the website

Email: [DRC@ufsa.ufl.edu](mailto:DRC@ufsa.ufl.edu)

Phone: ( 352 ) 392-8565