

Animals in the Library

Purpose

The Cariboo Regional District Library (“the Library”) recognizes that patrons with disabilities may have a service animal or guide dog to avoid hazards or perform tasks. The Library recognizes their legal rights under Provincial legislation and the BC Human Rights Code. The Library also considers the safety and health of all its patrons, the public, and Library employees to be of utmost priority.

Background and Definitions

British Columbia’s *Guide Dog and Service Dog Act* (GDSDA) and related regulations define the rules of access, and govern how guide and service dogs, and their handlers are certified. “Service dogs” are defined as a dog that

- (a) Is trained to perform specific tasks to assist a person with a disability, and
- (b) Is certified as a service dog; (*Guide Dog and Service Dog Act*, SBC 2015, c 17, s.1)

Under the GDSDA, “[a] guide dog team, service dog team or dog-in-training team may, in the same manner as would an individual who is not a member of any of those teams, enter and use any place, accommodation, building, or conveyance to which the public is invited or has access, provided that the individual who is a member of the team ensures the dog that is a member of the team

- (a) does not occupy a seat in a public conveyance or a place where food is served or dispensed to the public, as the case may be, and
- (b) is held by a leash or harness.” (*Guide Dog and Service Dog Act*, SBC 2015, c 17, s.2(1))

Animals whose sole function is to provide therapy or emotional support are not eligible for service dog certification and therefore, do not qualify as service animals under the GDSDA.

Policy

No pets or animals other than service dogs or service dogs-in-training are allowed in the Library. Owners of pets may be asked to remove them from the Library.

Individuals with disabilities may bring their service dogs into all areas of the Library where members of the public are normally allowed to go. All service dogs must be under the full custody and control of their handler at all times. The GDSDA notes, “[l]ike anyone acting inappropriately, a person may be refused access or asked to leave if they or their guide or service dog is disruptive.” (Government of British Columbia, 2023, para. 3).

The GDSDA provides for a voluntary certification process. “Requesting identification for a guide or service dog may be found to be discriminatory in circumstances where a person’s disability and reliance on a guide or service dog is obvious. Where it is not obvious, a service provider may ask if the dog is a guide or service dog” (Government of BC, n.d., pg. 1). The GDSDA makes it an offense to represent a dog as belonging to a GDSDA certified guide or service dog team when it does not (Government of BC, 2023).

If the reliance on a potential guide or service dog is not obvious, employees may state / ask the following:

1. Only service dogs are allowed in the library;
2. Is this a pet or certified service animal?

Owners of service dogs or service dogs-in-training must indicate that they are working dogs and not pets. Terms used may include assistance, service, guide, hearing, or helping dog.

A person with a disability may not be asked to remove their service dog or service dog-in-training from the Library unless the presence, behavior, or actions of the service dog constitute an unreasonable and probable risk of injury or harm to property or other persons, or the dog is disruptive and the owner does not take effective action to control it. In these cases, Library employees must give the person with the disability the option to obtain Library services without having the service dog or service dog-in-training on the premises. Fear of allergies, annoyance on the part of other patrons or employees, or fear of dogs are generally not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people with service dogs or service dogs-in-training.

Exceptions for Library programmes

Pending approval by the Manager of Library Services or their designee, the Library may have animals in the Library as part of education or recreational programmes or other offerings.

References

Government of British Columbia (2023). *Guide Dog and Service Certification: The Rights and Responsibilities of Businesses and the Public*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/justice/human-rights/guide-and-service-dog/public-rights>

Government of British Columbia (n.d). *Protections for people with disabilities who require a guide or service dog: What you need to know*. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/human-rights/human-rights-protection/service-guide-dogs.pdf>

Guide Dog and Service Dog Act, SBC 2015, c 17.
<https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/15017>