



# McLean County Area EMS System

**TITLE:** Service Animal Policy

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

EMS providers often encounter patients with chronic conditions that necessitate the use of a service animal. This policy outlines guidelines for interaction and safe disposition of service animals when their handler is transported by EMS.

**GOAL/PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction for the interaction and safe disposition of service animals when their handler is transported by EMS.

**POLICY/PROCEDURE:**

1. The Americans with Disabilities Act defines a service animal as:  
Service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the handler's disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition.
2. Providers should not speak to or touch a service animal unless given permission by the handler
3. If the handler is incapacitated and cannot manage the service animal, local law enforcement and animal control should be contacted for assistance
4. If the handler is transported:
  - a. Every reasonable effort shall be made to ensure the service animal goes to the hospital
    - i. The first and ideal option would be to have a friend or family member transport the animal to the hospital. Law enforcement may be willing to assist and transport the

animal. Consider the use of other agency vehicles e.g. ambulance assist non-transport EMS or command vehicles. The service animal may be transported in the ambulance in the cab area as a first choice and in the patient area as a last resort. Consultation with the handler is strongly encouraged

- b. Notify the receiving hospital that a service animal will be arriving with the patient
5. Refusal to transport the service animal can only be made when the presence of the animal jeopardizes patient and/or crew safety and/or when the presence of the animal significantly impedes or negatively affects patient care. This threat and negative impact must be real and not perceived (such as “sometimes dogs bite” or based upon past experience “another service dog acted up”).
- a. Refusal to transport a service animal and the reason must be documented in the patient care report along with the disposition actions taken to ensure the service animals safety.
  - b. If the crew or handler refuses the transport of the service animal, the providers shall make every reasonable effort to ensure the animal remains safe, is properly secured, and cared for.