



Position Statement on Public Access for Therapy Animals

The Americans with Disabilities Act allows those with disabilities to be accompanied by a working assistance animal (guide, hearing and service dogs and sometimes mini-horses) in public places such as grocery stores, restaurants, and airplanes. While several institutions such as hospitals, schools, or clinical practices allow and encourage the presence of therapy animals, the handlers or owners of the therapy animals are not granted the same rights to public access as assistance dogs.

Therapy animals are both fundamentally and legally different from emotional support or assistance animals. While therapy animals are evaluated and registered for working with the public through a therapy animal organization, it is important to note that this does not give them any public access rights. Pet Partners takes seriously a reported infraction of a registered therapy animal being “passed off” as an assistance animal, or the use of Pet Partners identification, like a vest or badge, to suggest the animal is anything other than a therapy animal. Therapy animal handlers, by always acting with integrity, can be public educators regarding the difference between an assistance animal and a therapy animal.

About This Document

Pet Partners holds a variety of positions on therapy animal health and welfare that are not only important to our message and organization, but are also important to researchers, professionals, facilities, and the general public. This position statement has been approved by Pet Partners’ Human-Animal Bond Advisory Board and Board of Directors.