

Missouri Revised Statutes on Service Animals



In late July 2020, the Missouri General Assembly passed Senate Bill No. 656 to enact twenty-one new sections relating to veterans. Included in this bill is updated legislation related to the rights and responsibilities of those who utilize service and assistance animals in Missouri. Updated service and assistance animal legislation can be found in section 209.150 of the bill.

In Missouri, the term “service dog” means “A dog that is being or has been 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”. Service protections include areas covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act, including public accommodations and programs or facilities of state or local governments. The State of Missouri now recognizes and defines several classes of service animal, including but not limited to:

- Guide dog
- Hearing dog
- Medical alert or response dog
- Mental health service dog
- Mobility dog
- Professional therapy dog
- Search and rescue dog
- Service dog team

The State of Missouri also recognizes the exception of “miniature horses” in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Any person who knowingly misrepresents an animal as a service animal to attempt to gain access to a place of public accommodation or a state or local government program or facility is guilty of a Class C misdemeanor and is responsible for any actual damages incurred during such interaction. Subsequent violations may be treated as Class B misdemeanors with the same damage responsibilities as the first violation.

In addition, Senate Bill No. 656 provides that people using “assistance animals” (including animals other than dogs) shall have the right to access housing as covered by the Fair Housing Act. The definition of a assistance animal in Missouri is “an animal that works, provides assistance, or performs tasks, for the benefit of a person with a disability, or that provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified effects of a person’s disability”. As with public accommodations and governmental programs and facilities, any person who knowingly misrepresents a service or assistance animal for the purpose of receiving accommodations in housing shall be guilty of either a class C or class B misdemeanor and will be responsible for all actual damages caused by the animal or the action of the person involved.

Misrepresentation of a service dog or assistance animal includes but is not limited to:

1. Knowingly creating documents that falsely represent that a dog is a service or assistance animal
2. Knowingly providing to another person documents falsely stating that an animal is a service dog or assistance animal
3. Knowingly fitting an dog, if the dog is not a service dog, or the animal, if the animal is not an assistance animal, with a harness, collar, vest, or sign of the type commonly used by a person with a disability to indicate service dog or assistance animal status
4. Knowingly and intentionally misrepresenting a material fact to a health care provider for the purpose of obtaining documentation from the health care provider to designate a dog as a service dog, or an animal as an assistance animal.

Missouri's new service animal legislation exceeds the Americans with Disabilities Act as it explicitly covers service and assistance animals in training in both housing covered by the Fair Housing Act and other covered public settings throughout the state.

The Governor' Council on Disabiity has developed updated resources for business owners, landlords, and regarding laws related to service dogs, assistance animals, and housing under federal and Missouri law. including:

- A revised Service Animals Allowed booklet.
- A one page fact sheet for business owners.
- A one page fact sheet on assistance animals in housing.
- A placard which can be placed in the window or door of a business.

These resource can be found on the Service Animals page of the Missouri Disability Portal at <https://disability.mo.gov/serviceanimals.htm>. The fact sheets and placard were designed in accordance with Senate Bills 644 and 656. **The bill takes effect August 28, 2020.**

For more information on updates to Missouri legislation related to service dogs and assistance animals, please contact the Great Plains ADA Center at 1-800-949-4232 or 1-573-882-3600. Email: adacenter@missouri.edu

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