



ASSISTANCE DOG ETIQUETTE

Assistance Dogs and their Handlers are protected under Federal legislation, DDA 1992: and in some states, also under state legislation. Acts that prevent or interfere with an Assistance Dog Team working may be considered Discrimination for which there are penalties.

It is very important that Teams are left alone to go about their lives without distraction, interruption or interference from the general public. When a Team is interrupted there is a risk that a medical episode may be triggered, or not pre-empted, because the Team - Handler and Dog – are not able to focus on each other.

Please remember :-

A ASK– Don't ask the Handler personal questions, give them space, respect their privacy, allow them to go about their day.

S STARE – Don't stare at the Dog or the Team, and don't take photos. Many Handlers have struggled to come out in public and the added and unnecessary attention of strangers can make socialising harder for them.

S SEPARATE – **NEVER separate the dog and the Handler.** You are not helping, by trying to take the dog away. If a Handler is in any sort of episode, it is even more essential the dog remains with them. Its what they are trained to do.

I INTERRUPT – Don't think because you want to pat the dog, talk to the dog or ask the Handler questions, that they want to speak to a stranger, when they are just trying to get through their day. If you want to know more about Assistance Dogs, do an internet or organisation search for information.

S SPEAK to the Handler, NOT the dog. The dog is there for its Handler not for your amusement or satisfaction. If you must speak, speak to the Handler, and ignore the dog.

T TOUCH – Don't Touch, Pat or Distract the Assistance Dog. It has a job to do. Its focus is on its Handler. It is not interested in you. You put the dog and the Handler at risk by distracting it in any way. If the dog has been taught to form a boundary between strangers and the Handler, and you touch it, it may not react well. You are invading its space, and therefore its Handler's space. Don't expect a warm reception from either of them.

A ASSUME – NOTHING! You have no idea, and it's not your business why a Handler has an Assistance Dog, why it has that breed, sex, age or size. Assistance Dogs meet the needs of their Handler, not the expectations of the public. Intelligent Disobedience is when the Dog knows to ignore the Handler's commands/choices, and tune in to the Handler's actual needs, which may be for them to sit down, leave the environment, or avoid a particular trigger. What you see as a mis-behaving dog, is mostly like a dog who is tasking for their Handler. Don't have or voice an opinion about what you don't know or understand. It's not your business.

N NO FOOD – Do not try to feed or entice an Assistance Dog with food or anything else. Only the Handler or their support person feeds the dog. Only they know its diet, its needs, and when it receives treats and why. Plus many human foods and medications are fatal to dogs. It's not your dog, don't feed it!

C CONFUSE – Don't call, whistle, talk in a baby voice or any other distraction aimed at getting the dog's attention. It is in public because it has been trained to work. It is not a pet, it is not there to play. It is not there to amuse you. When you call it, you are confusing it, and momentarily at least taking its focus away from the Handler. You are also very likely to be causing the Handler distress as they need their dog's full attention.

E EDUCATE – Yourself, others, children that you know, and workplaces about Assistance Dogs, their purpose, their work ethic, and this etiquette when around them. Help us to help the community know how best to support people with disabilities who are supported by an Assistance Dog. Education 1. Not all Disabilities are Visible. Education 2. A person's disability is none of your business. Education 3. Why they have an Assistance Dog, or why they have that particular Assistance Dog – also none of your business. Education 4. If you want to know more, do your own research, don't interrupt a Handler while they are going about their day. Education 5. Keep educating yourself and others, starting with this Etiquette list.

ASSISTANCE DOG TEAMS

Need you to give them space, mind your own business, and to not interrupt them.

Thank you for being interested and reading all the way through this information.

To know more go to www.pawsomeassistancedogs.org