

## **POLICY ON ANIMALS IN THE YMCA**

The Akron Area YMCA (the “YMCA”) is supportive of patrons with disabilities who may be accompanied by service animals that are trained to assist with a sensory, mental, or physical disability or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. The YMCA recognizes the rights of disabled patrons to use service animals pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Ohio law. The YMCA also recognizes the importance of the health and safety of all patrons, the public, and YMCA staff. Therefore, the following guidelines apply to animals in the YMCA.

### **Policy**

Only service animals that are needed by disabled patrons are permitted in the YMCA and only under the conditions set forth in this policy. Pets, therapy animals, comfort animals, and emotional support animals are not permitted to accompany patrons in the YMCA.

### **Definitions**

#### ***1. Service Animal***

A service animal is a dog or miniature horse (no more than 100 pounds and 34 inches tall) that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The task(s) performed by the service animal must be directly related to the person’s disability. The service animal must be trained to perform a specific action needed to assist the person with a disability. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind; alerting people who are deaf; pulling a wheelchair; alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure; calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack; or retrieving an item for a person with a mobility impairment.

#### ***2. Other Animals***

Neither the crime deterrent effects of an animal’s presence nor the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship constitute work or tasks required for use of a service animal. Therefore, pets, therapy animals, comfort animals, and emotional support animals are not permitted as service animals.

### **Where Service Animals Are Allowed**

Generally, patrons with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animal in all areas of the YMCA’s facilities and programs where the patron is permitted access. Such areas include public areas, public events, and other areas where YMCA programs or activities are held.

Service animals, however, are not permitted in any area of the YMCA where not permitted under local health codes. Therefore, service animals are not permitted in any of the pools but may be present on the pool deck if properly supervised.

## **Assessing Service Animal Status**

### ***1. Permitted Inquiries***

YMCA personnel will permit service animal access with a patron when it is readily apparent that the animal is trained to do work or perform tasks to assist the patron's disability. Examples include a dog guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling an individual's wheelchair, or providing assistance with stability or balance to an individual with an observable mobility disability.

If the need for the service animal is not apparent, YMCA personnel may ask the following questions of service animal owners:

- (1) Whether the service animal is required because of a disability; and
- (2) What work or task the animal has been trained to perform to assist with the disability.

If the animal is required because of a patron's disability and the animal has been trained to do work or a task for the owner, the service animal will be admitted. If YMCA staff has a concern that the animal is not a service animal as defined herein, the matter will be reviewed by the Director or Designee for a determination in accordance with this policy.

Service animal owners will not be asked to identify their disability or to provide medical documentation. Owners also will not be asked for a special registration, identification card, license, or other documentation that the animal is a service animal. Service animals are not required to be licensed or certified by a state or local government or training program or be identified by a special harness or collar.

### ***2. YMCA Assistance***

Patrons with disabilities will not be charged a fee for bringing their service animals onto YMCA premises and are not required to register their service animal with the YMCA. However, patrons who regularly access the YMCA are encouraged to notify the Director or Designee of the need for a service animal so that the Director or Designee can provide advance notice to all personnel that the owner and service animal are entitled to access.

Otherwise, until YMCA staff members become familiar with a patron who uses a service animal, the patron should reasonably expect that staff members may inquire as to whether the patron is disabled and what work or task the animal has been trained to perform to assist with the disability. This is not meant to inconvenience or embarrass patrons in any way, but to ensure that this policy is followed by all patrons.

## **Service Animal Owners' Responsibilities**

Service animal owners are solely responsible for:

- Keeping the service animal under their direct control at all times, such as by a harness, leash, or other tether. If the use of a harness, leash, or other tether interferes with the service animal's safe and effective performance of work or tasks, or if the owner's disability

prevents the use of such devices, then the service animal must be under the owner's control through voice control, signals, or other effective means.

- Supervising and caring for the service animal. Owners must keep the service animal directly with them at all times.
- Ensuring the service animal does not disturb or disrupt normal YMCA functions and other patrons.
- Immediately cleaning up after the service animal and properly disposing of the service animal's waste or other debris.
- Complying with any relevant city, county and/or state license and leash laws while the service animal is on YMCA premises.
- Keeping the service animal off of YMCA furniture, gym equipment, and fixtures. The service animal must remain on the floor or be carried (as appropriate) by the owner at all times.
- Paying for any damage or injury caused by the service animal.

### **Removal of Service Animals from YMCA Facilities**

YMCA personnel may ask a service animal owner to remove their service animal from YMCA premises if:

- The animal is not a service animal.
- The service animal is not required to assist the owner due to a disability.
- The owner does not sufficiently establish that the animal has been trained to perform work or a specific task related to the owner's disability.
- The service animal is not under the owner's direct control.
- The service animal is not housebroken.
- The service animal barks excessively, is uncontrolled, barks or growls at others, or is otherwise disruptive.
- The service animal poses a safety threat to others.

If the service animal is disturbing or disrupting the normal YMCA routines, in its sole discretion, the YMCA Director or Designee may first give the owner an opportunity to gain proper control over the animal. If the disruption or disturbance continues, the owner may be asked to remove the animal.

If the presence, behavior, or actions of the service animal constitutes an immediate risk or danger to people or property, the owner can be asked to immediately remove the animal and 911 (emergency assistance) may be contacted.

If asked to remove the service animal, the owner will be offered the opportunity to return to the YMCA premises without the service animal. The Director or Designee will meet with the owner

to identify any reasonable accommodation(s) that will enable the individual to participate in YMCA services or programs.

Owners with concerns about the removal of their service animal should contact the Director or Designee.

### **Service Animals in Training**

Service dogs that are being trained by non-profit agencies for the purpose of assisting blind, deaf, hearing impaired, or mobility impaired persons may access the YMCA in accordance with this policy. However, the YMCA reserves the right to require proof that the service dog in training is covered by an insurance policy covering personal injury and property damage.

### **Exceptions for YMCA Offerings**

Upon approval by the Director or Designee, the YMCA may have animals on YMCA premises as part of its educational, programming, and recreational offerings.

### **Animal Endangerment**

The YMCA does not condone leaving non-service animals outside the YMCA in a way that may endanger the animal or YMCA patrons. The YMCA reserves the right to contact the police or other appropriate authorities regarding any unattended animals on its premises. The YMCA also reserves the right to deny access to patrons who endanger animals in such a way.

### **Violations of Policy**

Depending on the seriousness of the animal's conduct or repeated conduct, service animals may be permanently excluded from YMCA property. If a service animal is excluded, the Director or Designee will meet with the owner to identify any reasonable accommodation(s) that will enable the individual to participate in YMCA services or programs.

Misrepresenting an animal as a service animal is a violation of the YMCA's Code of Conduct and may result in suspension of YMCA access.

### **Acknowledgement/Signature**

I acknowledge that I have received, reviewed, understand, and agree to adhere by this policy. I agree that while I am at the YMCA, I will be expected to abide by this policy. The YMCA reserves the right to amend this policy.

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Signature

Print

Date