**** **[County]** **[Court]**

**MODEL POLICY REGARDING SERVICE**

**ANIMALS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

[Court Name], is committed to making reasonable modifications to its policies, practices, and procedures to permit the use of service animals by people with disabilities. Service animals play an important role in ensuring the independence of people with disabilities, and it is therefore our policy to welcome into the courts any animal that is individually trained to assist a person with a disability.

**What is a Service Animal?**Service animals are individually trained to work or perform tasks for individuals with disabilities. Service animals are not always dogs; other animals may assist people with disabilities. Service animals come in all breeds and sizes, may be trained either by an organization or by an individual with a disability, and need not be certified or licensed. Service animals do not always have a harness, a sign, or a symbol indicating that they are service animals. A service animal is not a pet. Service animals assist people with disabilities in many different ways, such as:

* Guiding people who are blind or have low vision and retrieving dropped objects for them;
* Alerting people who are deaf or hard of hearing to sounds and the presence of others;
* Carrying and picking up items, opening doors, or flipping switches for people with disabilities who have limited use of hands or arms, limited use of their legs, or limited ability to bend or stoop;
* Pulling wheelchairs;
* Alerting people with disabilities to the onset of medical conditions such as seizures, protecting them and cushioning them if they fall and reviving them.
* Doing work or performing tasks for persons with traumatic brain injury, intellectual disabilities, or psychiatric disabilities, such as reminding a person with depression to take medication or waking him up, helping people with traumatic brain injury to locate misplaced items, or follow daily routines.
* Providing physical support and assisting people with physical disabilities with stability and balance.

**Court Employee Responsibilities:**Court employees welcome court users with service animals. Sometimes employees may be responsible for determining if an animal is a service animal. Most of the time, people with disabilities who use service animals may be easily identified without any need for questioning. If you can tell by looking, you should not make the court user feel unwelcome by asking questions. If you are unsure whether an animal meets the definition of a service animal, one **employee** and, where necessary, a member of **Management** may ask the user only one question:

* Is this a service animal required because of a disability?

If the court user says yes or otherwise explains that the animal is required because of a disability, you should welcome the person and service animal into the court. Do not ask any further questions about the customer or his or her service animal. You may **not** ask a customer questions about his or her disability. You may **not** ask a customer to show a license, certification, or a special ID card as proof of their animal’s training. You must **permit** service animals to accompany customers with disabilities to all areas of the court normally used by other customers.

**All Employees’ Responsibilities Regarding Service Animals:**

If you have a concern about an animal in a court, contact the [ADA Coordinator]. Only a [Judicial Officer, Court Administrator or ADA Coordinator] can make the decision to exclude a service animal, except in the unusual circumstance where a service animal’s behavior requires immediate action to prevent imminent injury to others and there is not enough time to contact the [Judicial Officer, Court Administrator or ADA Coordinator].

**Judicial Officer, Court Administrator and ADA Coordinator Responsibilities:**In the event that a particular service animal’s vicious behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, the service animal is acting out of control and the owner does not take action to correct its behavior, or in the unlikely event that the court can demonstrate that a particular service animal’s conduct fundamentally alters the nature of the court’s business, [Judicial Officer, Court Administrator, ADA Coordinator]has the right to exclude the animal from court at that time. Barking alone is not a direct threat. In addition, a direct threat does not exist if the service animal’s owner takes prompt, effective action to control the animal. Moreover, [Court Name] will not exclude a particular service animal based on past experience with other animals or based on fear that is not related to a service animal’s actual behavior. Each situation will be considered individually. In the event [Court Name] excludes a service animal, it will not refuse service to the individual with a disability when he or she is not accompanied by that particular service animal.

**Questions/Inquiries/Complaints**Customers can make complaints about the improper treatment of customers with service animals by calling [ADA Coordinator]. People with disabilities have the right to be accompanied by service animals in the court under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and [Court Name] considers interference with or denial of this right to be a serious violation of policy. The court will promptly investigate all complaints raising this issue and will take appropriate disciplinary action when employees fail to comply with this Policy.

**ADA Coordinator for :**

*[Name of ADA Coordinator]*

Address

City, State, Zip

ADA Coordinator's Phone #

ADA Coordinator's Email Address