

Mini Grant Program Service Animal Funding Guidelines

Service Animals (\$2,500)

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority supports funding requests for service animals in accordance to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). **Service animals are defined as animals that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.** The work or task a service animal has been trained to provide must mitigate the effects directly related to the person's 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, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Psychiatric Service Dogs (PSDs) are service dogs trained to perform tasks which mitigate an individual's psychiatric disability.

Emotional Support Animals & Therapy Animals (not funded)

An emotional support animal (ESA) is an animal that has been prescribed for a person by a licensed therapist (a licensed mental health professional). They are sometimes referred to as comfort animals, comfort pets, or companion animals. These animals do not require specific task-training because it is the very presence of the animal that mitigates the negative symptoms associated with a person's condition. Therapy animals accompany their owners typically into institutional settings such as schools, hospitals, psychotherapy programs, and residential settings to improve the lives of other people. Many people confuse therapy animals with service animals. A therapy animal is typically a dog (but can be other species) that has been obedience trained and screened for its ability to interact favorably with humans and other animals.

Emotional Support (ESA) and Therapy animals are not included in the ADA update (2010) regarding public accommodation for service dogs. Broader definitions exist for "assistance animals" under the Fair Housing Act and the Air Carrier Access Act, but neither ESA nor therapy animals are defined as service animals.

All applicants must provide:

- Documentation of medical necessity that clearly identifies the tasks that the service dog will be trained to perform that will mitigate the individual's disability to improve quality of life. This should include the professional's judgment as to the capability of the patient/client to handle a service dog in all public venues.
- Plan for maintenance and ongoing care of the animal (regularly scheduled veterinarian checkups, shots, sterilization, feeding plan, environmental modifications (fenced yard, doggy doors, etc.) and source of funding.
 - If the service animal is part of a tri-pod (cared for by a support team), please provide the names of those individuals who will assist in controlling, managing and caring for the animal
- Verification from landlord on approval to reside in residential unit (service animals in training do not have the same public access rights) if needed.
- Break out of training program costs, including a list of other funding sources (it is permissible for Trust funding to be used for segments of training program or placement). The Trust should be a funder of last resort.

Owner self-trainer service animal training program:

- Provide a training plan completed by the professional trainer which includes: timeline for completion of training, expectations for task training, public access testing, field trips and public exposure, level of guidance provided by professional trainer, and plan for follow-up support after the dog completes training.
- Provide a copy of credentials and experience demonstrating the qualification of the professional service dog trainer. Include certificate of completion from an accredited training program, current business license and experience.
- Proof of completion of a training program by a reputable obedience trainer for novice level obedience, Canine Good Citizen, or other equivalent training. This includes verification a trainer has observed or evaluated for task suitability; temperament, learning, socialization capabilities.

Agency based service animal training/placement program:

- Provide credentials and experience demonstrating the qualifications of the organization. Include certificate of completion from an accredited training program, current business license, and years of experience training service dogs.
- Provide an individualized training plan, placement program, and timeline for completion of training that addresses task training, public access testing, field trips and public exposure, and plan for follow-up support after the dog completes training (this must be completed by the trainer).

