

BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY

ANIMALS IN THE LIBRARY POLICY

Policy adopted by Library Board of trustees October 11, 2016

Bethlehem Public Library recognizes that some patrons may have service animals, which are trained to assist or accommodate a person with a sensory, mental, or physical disability or to perform tasks for the benefit of a disabled individual.

Bethlehem Public Library recognizes legal rights under federal and state laws regarding use of service animals. The Library also considers the safety and health of all of its patrons, the public and library staff to be of utmost priority.

Patrons are not permitted to bring animals into any library building with the exception of the following:

Service Animals (service animals in training):

In accordance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, any person with a disability is allowed to bring their service animal into the library.

Individuals with disabilities may bring their service animals into all areas of the library where members of the public are normally allowed to go.

All service animals must be under the full custody and control of their handler at all times. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the owner's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the service animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls. Owners of the service animals are solely responsible for the supervision and care of the service animal. Therefore, owners must keep the service animal directly with them at all times.

A service animal is defined as an animal "that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability." The task(s) performed by the animal must be directly related to the person's disability.

Users of service animals are not required to show papers or to prove a disability. Documentation is not required. 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.

Staff may ask if an animal is a pet or a service animal required because of a disability. Owners of service animals or service animals in training will indicate that they are working animals and not pets. Terms used may include assistance, service, guide, hearing or helping animal. Staff may not ask about the owner's disability. Any animal identified as a service animal must be admitted.

A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his or her service animal or service animal in training from the library unless the presence, behavior or actions of the service animal constitutes an unreasonable risk of injury or harm to property or other persons. In these cases, library staff should

give the person with the disability the option to obtain library services without having the service animal or service animal in training in the building.

Fear of allergies, annoyance on the part of other patrons or employees or fear of animals are generally not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people with service animals or service animals in training.

Library-Sponsored Programs

The library may choose to offer educational programs for the public that include various animals. Such animals are permitted in the library building for the duration of the program and must be accompanied by the owner at all times.

Violation of Policy

Owners of pets will be asked to remove them from inside the library building or in areas outdoors if they impede anyone's progress into or out of the library.