

RIVER VALLEY COUNSELING CENTER, INC.

POLICY/PROCEDURE # ADMIN-19

SUBJECT: SERVICE/ASSISTANCE DOGS

DATE REVIEWED/REVISED: 9/15, 1/17, 9/19, 5/20

POLICY STATEMENT: RVCC welcomes all individuals into all its sites and adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations regarding service dogs **with one exception. RVCC recognizes the need for “assistance” dogs. These dogs are allowed to accompany an individual for emotional support.**

PURPOSE: To accommodate individuals who require service/assistance dogs.

RESPONSIBILITY: All staff

According to the ADA:

- Service/assistance dogs are working animals, not pets
- A service/assistance dog is trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability.
- Organizations that serve the general public must allow service/assistance dogs to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of the facility where the public is normally allowed to go.
- Service/assistance dogs must be harnessed, leashed or tethered, and its owner must be in full control of the animal at all times. Excessive barking is not permitted.
- People with a service/assistance dog can't be isolated from other clients.
- Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service/assistance dogs

PROCEDURE:

When it is not obvious what service a service/assistance dog provides, staff may only ask two questions: 1.) is the dog a service/assistance dog required because of a disability, and 2.) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform.

Staff CAN NOT ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

The discussion about having a service/assistance dog accompany clients to appointments should be discussed with the clinician **and not the front desk.**

The only time a front desk staff person can address the client about the service/assistance dog is if the dog is not under the owner's control i.e. excessive barking or not leashed.