

VA



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VA Announces New Rules Regarding Service Animals in VA Facilities

WASHINGTON – Today the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has revised its regulation regarding the presence of animals on VA property. The updated regulation will ensure VA practices remain consistent with applicable federal law. It will also assist individuals entering VA facilities in developing a clear and consistent understanding of the criteria governing facility access for service animals.

“As I have traveled to VA facilities throughout the country, I have heard from many Veterans about what a vital role their service animals play in their lives,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. “The revised regulation will ensure Veterans and employees have clear guidance regarding the presence of service animals in our facilities. VA remains committed to ensuring America’s Veterans have access to the health care benefits for which they are eligible.”

Under the revised regulation, only dogs that are individually trained to perform work or tasks on behalf of an individual with a disability will be considered service animals. Other animals will not be permitted in VA facilities, unless expressly allowed as an exception under the regulation for activities such as animal-assisted therapy or for other reasons such as law enforcement purposes. The regulation further confirms that service animals may access VA property subject to the same terms that govern the admission of the public to VA property, and may be restricted from certain areas on VA properties to ensure that patient care, patient safety, and infection control standards are not compromised.

In accordance with required practices, the revised regulation was published in the Federal Register in November 2014, to obtain feedback from Veterans, advocacy organizations and other stakeholders.

Over the next thirty days, VA will provide training to frontline employees and ensure policies at all facilities are consistent with the new regulation.

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