

Marsh Harbour Inn Service Animal Information

Federal and State of NC Service Dog Information

Under North Carolina law and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), people with disabilities may bring their service animals to public accommodations.

Public accommodations in North Carolina must comply with both state and federal law, and their patrons are entitled to rely on whichever law provides the most protections.

What Is Considered a Service Animal in North Carolina?

North Carolina law on public accommodations refers to service animals but doesn't define which animals qualify. However, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services has created a brochure for businesses regarding customers with service animals, which uses the ADA's definition. *Under the ADA, a service animal is a dog that is individually trained to perform tasks or do work for the benefit of a person with a disability.* The tasks or work the animal does must be directly related to the person's disability.

Examples of service animals include a guide dog that assists a blind or visually impaired person in navigating safely; a hearing animal that alerts someone who is deaf or has impaired hearing to important sounds, such as sirens, doorbells, ringtones, and so on; an animal that pulls a wheelchair, pushes elevator buttons, retrieves items, or offers stability and support for someone with mobility restrictions; or a psychiatric service animal that scans for safety threats or interrupts someone from acting in a dangerous or self-destructive way.

Neither law covers what some call "emotional support animals or therapy dogs"; animals that provide a sense of safety, companionship, and comfort to those with psychiatric or emotional disabilities or conditions. Although these animals often have therapeutic benefits, they are not individually trained to perform specific tasks for their handlers. Under the ADA and North Carolina law, owners of public accommodations are not required to allow emotional support animals, only service animals. The Marsh Harbour Inn does not allow Emotional Support Animals or Therapy dogs.

North Carolina law says that you qualify for these rights by either displaying a tag, issued by the state Health and Human Services Department, stating that you have registered your animal as a service animal, or by showing that the animal has been or is being trained to act as a service animal. You can find the application form for this registration at the Department of Health and Human Services' website. You aren't required to get this registration.

You cannot be charged extra to bring your service dog to any public accommodation. However, you can be required to pay for any damage your services dog causes.

An establishment may not ask you detailed questions about your disability or your animal. However, the establishment may ask if your animal is a service animal, and which tasks the animal is trained to perform.

A public accommodation is not required to allow your service animal to remain if it poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. If, for example, your service dog is growling and lunging at other patrons, and you are unable to stop the behavior, the dog might have to leave. An establishment may also exclude a service dog that isn't housebroken, exhibits loud barking that disturbs other quests outside of barking that provides a service to the owner or is otherwise out of control.