

Accessible Customer Service for Emergency Responders

An Emergency Management Ontario E-Learning Utility

Tips for Interacting with a Person with a Service Animal

Approach and Introduction

- A service animal is not a pet.
- Introduce yourself to the person.

Communication

- Ask the person if s/he would like some assistance. A person with vision loss may want to take your arm, with her dog accompanying both of you. Or, s/he may instruct her dog to find and follow you as you walk ahead. Or s/he may simply ask for directions and proceed on her own.
- If s/he wants to instruct her dog to follow you, walk a few paces ahead and provide verbal directions as you go (“we’re going to be taking the next left”). The person with will instruct her dog.

Physical contact

- Offer your arm by making contact with the back of the person’s hand. They may have a preference about which arm s/he chooses, depending on how s/he normally positions her dog.

Behaviour

- Avoid touching, talking to or making eye contact with the service animal.
- When the dog is wearing its harness, it is on duty.
- If you must take the dog while assisting the person, hold the leash rather than the harness.
- It is best to transport the person with a disability and his/her service animal together.