



## Topeka Zoo; Service Dog Policy and procedure

Revised 11/28/2022

### Preface

*The purposes of policies are to provide staff with direction and guidance on procedures as related to the operation of the Topeka Zoo and Conservation Center. The adopted policy is expected to be followed at all times. If exceptions to the policy occur, the supervisor should approve the exception, before implementing the change. This policy will remain in force until rescinded or revised by the Director.*

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a "service animal" as a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. Certification or licensure is not required. However, staff may inquire whether the dog is a service animal and what tasks the dog has been trained to perform. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support or therapy dogs that provide a service to others do not qualify as "service animals" under the ADA. Pets are still excluded from the Zoo.

There are a couple of other categories of service dogs that are addressed in state law: (1) service dogs in training; and (2) professional therapy dogs.

### Service dogs in training.

A dog that is being trained to be a service dog must be admitted to the Zoo with its trainer and is subject to the same rules as a trained service dog. The only difference is that the trainer must produce, upon request, an identification card or letter that contains the following information: (1) name of the trainer; (2) name of the training center; (3) address and telephone number of the training center; (4) the types of functions for which the dog is trained; and (5) a picture of the trainer.

### Professional therapy dogs.

This is a dog that is trained to provide specific physical or therapeutic functions under the control of a qualified handler who works with the dog as part of a team. A dog that is being trained to be a professional therapy dog must be admitted to the Zoo with its handler and is subject to the same rules as a trained service dog. Handlers must produce, upon request, the same information as a service dog in training.

Service animals must be harnessed, leashed or tethered unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls. The care and supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of the owner. In

compliance with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, fully trained Service Dogs are welcome at the Topeka Zoo. It is our intent for all guests to safely enjoy the zoo's experiences while being responsible stewards of the rare animals in our care including rules set by the USDA *Animal Welfare Act*. The Topeka Zoo has the right to designate restricted access to specific exhibits and off exhibit tours for the animal's welfare. (Service and Zoo animals) Service animals may only be excluded from the zoo when that animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. Examples are vicious behavior towards other guests, a dog that is out of control and the handler cannot or does not regain control, or if the dog is not housebroken. If a service animal is excluded, the individual with the disability who uses the service animal must have the option of continuing to enjoy the zoo. The zoo is not required to provide care, food or a special location for service dogs.

The Topeka Zoo is responsible for the health and well-being of collections of prized, and in many cases, rare and endangered species of animals. The zoo is the guardian of these animals and is subject to stringent regulations pertaining to their protection. In the event that a service animal's presence within certain areas of the zoo is demonstrated (through prior or current displays of agitation) to cause zoo animals in that area undue stress or anxiety, or present the potential for injury, we reserve the right to designate such areas as off-limits to the service animal, or to designate the area as sensitive and request that guests observe extra caution in such areas. Sensitive areas may be designated as a result of new births or hatchings, nesting or breeding behavior in progress, or new animals in exhibits. Service animals can be restricted from areas where Zoo animals are the natural prey or natural predators of service animals (i.e. dogs) or where the presence of the animal would be disruptive, causing the Zoo animal(s) to behave aggressively or become agitated. Staff will monitor the service animal's progress through parts of the zoo to ensure that, if a serious problem develops, including one that the person with the service animal may not be aware of, the service animal can be removed from the area before undue stress, an injury or death occurs.

#### Animal Wellness/Welfare Rules or restrictions

If the Zoo animals are visibly upset or agitated by the service animal's presence, the visitor and service animal must move on to another exhibit immediately. Signs of agitation include: barking, howling, growling, bumping into their exhibit windows or walls, running around their exhibit, and/or erratic movements.

- Service animals may not have any Zoo animal contact and are not allowed in certain areas having free roaming animals within reach of the service animal. Disabled guests wishing to view these restricted areas may leave the service animal with another member from their party outside the restricted areas.

#### **Restricted areas include:**

- Farm yard contact areas
- Rainforest- able to enter, please move swiftly through exhibit

- Indoor giraffe viewing area - keep distance
- Service animals are not allowed in certain areas of the Zoo that house animals that are especially vulnerable or sensitive to other predator species.

**Areas off limits are:**

- Giraffe feeding- off limits
  - Elephant barn-off limits
  - Lorikeet feeding- off limits
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- Zoo staff shall visually assess the service animal for obvious signs of aggressive or erratic behavior, lack of control or signs of ill--health. Signs of ill--health include: nasal discharge, vomiting, continuous itching, and signs of lice or ticks, presence of scabs or open skin lesions.
  - All Zoo exhibits should be approached slowly to give the Zoo's animal time to react to the presence of a service dog. For everyone's welfare, if an animal appears distressed or agitated, the dog should be immediately moved further back or walked beyond the exhibit completely. As a lover of animals and a zoo supporter, your understanding is greatly appreciated as the zoo carefully makes decisions for both your safety and enjoyment along with the welfare of our wonderful animals.