



DP EXPRESS

Winter 2022

Greetings **DisAbility Partners Community!**

It would be an understatement to say the pandemic has changed the way we all operate! At DisAbility Partners, we've done our best to continue to serve our consumers... working remotely & safely, distributing PPE kits, maintaining our Cyberpals program and distributing CARES Act funding.

In the interim, there have been great improvements in our center such as fresh paint, added office spaces, a newly-outfitted kitchen (complete with farm-style table) and our computer lab now has plexiglass partitions for additional protection. We look forward to a time when we can share this with our community!

When CARES Act funding became available, Disability Partners was able to support countless consumers experiencing financial distress due to COVID. With these funds now exhausted, we want to encourage consumers to stay in touch and hopefully set new goals! Feel free to contact us for more information on our core services.

We're focusing on well-being in this issue...the difference pets can make, the real facts on service animals, health updates and how to stay connected.

To request a printed copy of this newsletter, contact us @ **(828)298-1977**
And find us on Facebook @: <https://www.facebook.com/DisabilityPartners>



The Power of Pets

Unconditional love. Steadfast loyalty. Many of us know the value and comfort that comes along with having a pet. Studies have shown, particularly with those of us who struggle with mental, emotional and physical different abilities, the benefits of having a companion.

<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2018/02/power-pets>.

Service and Emotional Support Animals: The Facts

For many people, the rules and the laws applying to service animals and emotional support animals are somewhat confusing. First of all, service animals are covered under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and emotional support animals are covered under the Fair Housing Act. Let's begin with the facts in regard to service animals.

Under the ADA, service animals are required to be dogs but in certain cases miniature horses can be used as service animals. Different breeds of dogs can serve as a service animal. The type of breed chosen depends on the type of task the service dog needs to perform. Larger breeds such as Labs, Golden Retrievers, and German Shepherds to name a few are used as guide dogs for a person with vision loss or loss of mobility. Smaller dogs can be used for seizure alert dogs, hearing or PTSD. Also, people choose a certain breed because of low maintenance, but the most important aspect in choosing a breed is traits such as a calm nature and an animal not easily distracted by people or noise.

Service animals under the ADA are allowed to enter any public place of businesses or entities that provides goods and services to the public. Any business or entity cannot ask for any type of documentation or certification.

There are two questions the business is allowed to ask: 1. Is the animal required because of a disability? 2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform? The business or entity does have rights as well. They can ask someone to remove the service animal from the place for unruly behavior such jumping on other customers, barking or growling or even urinating or defecating on the floor. This doesn't mean the service animal is permanently denied from ever coming back into the business or entity but perhaps the service animal needs further training, or possibly the dog is having a bad day. Overall, it is the responsibility of the handler to keep his or her service animal under control at all times while in a public place.

A common question is, "How do I get my service animal certified?". Certification or registration is not required but some trainers do provide certification after training is completed. **There are several websites offering certification and registration for a fee. These resources are usually a scam to get money offering certification that is not valid.** Most businesses and entities are aware of the ADA law and service animals and will accommodate a person with a disability who enters their business with a service animal. Unfortunately, there are still some businesses that will refuse a service animal. In this case, the person with the service animal can make a complaint to the Department of Justice (DOJ) but it may be a situation where the business needs to be educated. Before going forth with a complaint to the DOJ, contact your local Center for Independent Living such as DisAbility Partners, and then a conversation can be held with the manager or owner of the business to provide the necessary education and the requirements.

The ADA does not require covered entities to modify policies, practices or procedures if it would "fundamentally alter" the nature of goods, services, programs, or activities provided to the public. Nor does it overrule legitimate safety requirements. If admitting service animals would fundamentally alter the nature of a service or program, service animals may be prohibited.

Although registration is not required, a program under NCDHHS is available where a service animal can be voluntarily registered in the state of NC. The application is to be completed by the individual with the service animal and the trainer. If you trained a service animal yourself instead of working with a trainer, a letter can be provided signed by a witness to verify what work or tasks the animal has been trained to perform. If your application is complete, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) will send you a registration tag for the animal's collar and an identification card you can carry in a wallet. For assistance to obtain an application, call 919-855-3524. Applications can also be obtained through this link: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/documents/files/serviceanimalregistration-10-2019/open>.

Emotional support animals are not defined as service animals. These pets may also be related to comfort. Therapeutic animals are used to describe animals that provide comfort just by being with a person. Because they have not been trained to perform a specific job or task, they do not qualify as a service animal under the ADA. **However, some State or local governments have laws that allow people to take emotional support animals into public places. You may check with your State and local government agencies to find out about these laws.**

Emotional support animals are typically a dog or cat but can be other animals such as a rabbit, ferret, bird, mini pigs, etc. **Under the Fair Housing Act, emotional support animals are allowed in "no pet" housing as a reasonable accommodation.** A reasonable accommodation can be either a verbal or written request along with a letter from a physician stating that the animal is needed as a therapeutic measure due to the tenant's disability. The landlord or manager can ask for further documentation if the disability is not obvious. **What the landlord or manager may not do is charge a pet fee or a deposit. This applies to service animals as well. Still, the tenant may be required to pay the costs of repairs for damage the animal potentially causes to the premises.**

If you have further questions about Service Animals or Emotional Support Animals you can contact DisAbility Partners at 828-298-1977.

<https://www.bwar.org/standing-strong-for-animals/>

Resources for Animals

If you are looking for a companion, or are seeking assistance with food and/or emergency, temporary shelter for your pet, contacting your local Humane Society is a wise place to start. The Humane Society provides pet food through numerous local agencies, including Meals on Wheels (828-253-5286) and Catholic Charities (828-255-0146). For a complete list with contact information, go to:

<https://www.ashevillehumane.org/resources/pet-food-assistance>

...or contact the Human Society in your county.



Health

With concerns about COVID and its variants all around us, we feel like any adjustments are worth it. In addition to wearing a mask and being vaccinated, be tuned in to your body and health....

3 Ways to Boost Your Immune System Against COVID-19

1. Sleep. We heal when we sleep.
2. Lower stress levels. Although you should practice lowering your stress levels year-round practicing amid this virus outbreak is particularly important as stress directly impacts your immune system.
3. Enjoy a balanced diet.

(And 4. Be gentle with yourself. These times are challenging for ALL of us.)



COVID Update

Personal Protective Equipment

DisAbility Partners continues to offer PPE kits, including hand sanitizer, reusable masks and non-latex gloves. Feel free to contact us with requests.

Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order #4 free at-home COVID-19 tests. The tests are completely free. Orders will usually ship in 7-12 days.

[Help with ordering free at-home COVID-19 tests](#)

On January 14, the [White House announced a new initiative](#) to help ensure Americans have COVID-19 tests on hand in case they are needed. The [website to order at-home testing kits](#) is at no cost and is now accepting orders. People who do not have Internet access or who need additional assistance with ordering can call 1-800-232-0233 (TTY 1-888-720-7489) to place their orders.

The [Eldercare Locator](#) and the [Disability Information and Assistance Line \(DIAL\)](#) also can assist older adults and people with disabilities with placing orders if they need additional help, connect people to accessible instructions, and help with administering the tests. Both phone lines are staffed Monday-Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Eastern).

- Older adults can call the Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116 Monday-Friday or [visit the website](#) to chat live or browse resources.
- People with disabilities can contact DIAL by calling 888-677-1199 or by emailing DIAL@usaginganddisability.org. The DIAL information specialists are trained to work with people of various communications abilities, including spending as much time as needed to understand callers. Deaf and hard-of-hearing people can reach DIAL using the 711/Video Relay Service (VRS). To use this free service, simply dial 711 to be connected via text with a communications assistant. (For people who do not communicate through

speech, sign language or VRS, email is the best option to communicate with DIAL.)



Cyberpals

Our Cyberpals program places donated, refurbished computers into the homes of local people with disabilities. Demand for this service has only grown throughout the COVID pandemic. We gratefully accept donations of desktop computers, laptops, and most computer peripherals that are no greater than 10 years old. Your donation can help someone in our community gain access to online services, employment, or online training. All computer hard drives are wiped to protect your privacy and your donation is tax-deductible.

If you're interested in donating or participating in our Cyberpals program, please call Marcos at 828-772-0508.



Upcoming Workshop

Living Well in the Community is a 12-week workshop, currently in an online format. We hope to begin our next session in late March or early April, TBA. We meet once a week for 2 hours, sharing resources, setting goals and discussing the curriculum. This is a safe, judgement-free space amongst peers. DisAbility Partners is able to provide some technical support for participants.

“I recently finished the LWC online workshop. It felt good to have a safe space to express and explore the challenges of being part of America's chronically ill who tend to be chronically ignored. The course gave me an opportunity to meet new people and the weekly focus subjects gave us a place to explore, define, and apply tools to make our journey workable. (LWC) provided new friends to connect with, in and outside the workshop. It was a good place to get the pace of Zooming. Now I can find online conversations anywhere. It's ironic that the pandemic pushed others into a lifestyle that the chronically ill and the homebound excelled at long ago. It's great to have these courses...” - “Oso” Wallman

For more information contact Susan.

sragdale@disabilitypartners.org

(828)772-0263

Thank you for reading. We wish you a safe, healthy winter and hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Eva, Kathy, Marcos & Susan