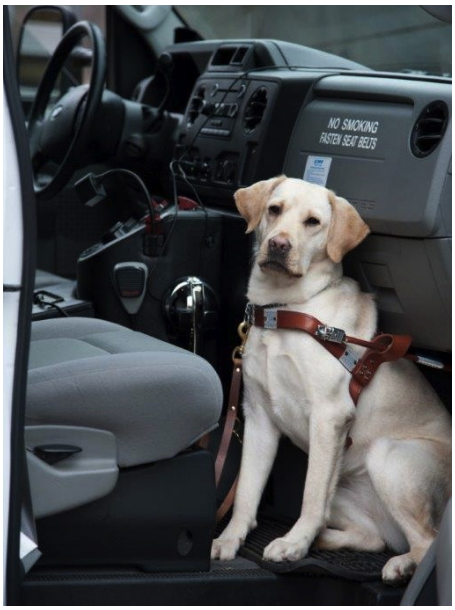
EMS and Service Dogs

A quick reference guide to providing safe and efficient care to people traveling with service dogs

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires hospitals and first responders to modify their practices as necessary to ensure that service dog users are provided with the same assistance as their peers. **EMS providers must be prepared to safely transport service dogs alongside their handlers.**

The ADA defines a service animal as any dog that is trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.

- EMS providers may not ask for proof of certification.
- A person may be asked to remove his or her service dog **only** if the dog is out of control or if the dog is not housebroken.
- A service dog is not a pet or companion dog.



There are no regulations to specify where a service dog should be placed during transport. The size of the dog, condition of the patient and space configurations of the apparatus will drive this decision.

A service dog may be placed alongside a center-frame stretcher, remaining clear of the EMS provider. When a patient requires life saving interventions, or if space prevents the dog from transport in the patient compartment, the cab may be a viable option. An alternative vehicle - such as a police car or paramedic fly car - may also be considered.

Created by Ret Capt. Cecilia Warren, MS, MBA in partnership with Guiding Eyes for the Blind
Photos by Liflander Photography
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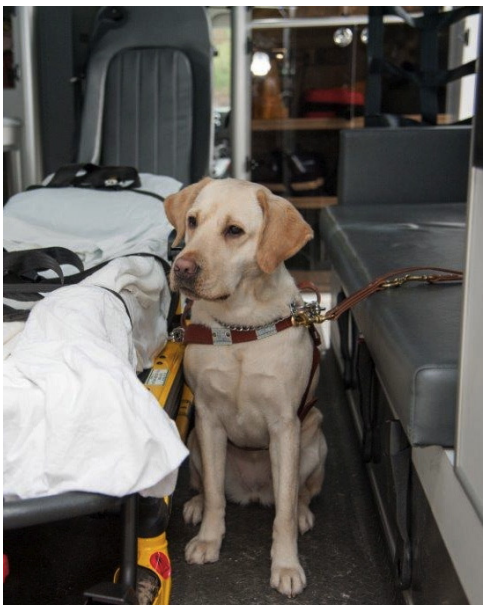
Best practices for transporting service dog teams:

- For everyone's safety, the dog should be tethered to a stationary device, i.e., the stretcher or a seatbelt that's locked into place.
- Be sure to secure the stretcher before placing the guide dog in the patient compartment. Remove the guide dog first upon arrival at your destination.
- If possible, place leash on the appropriate collar ring to prevent injury or asphyxiation when securing the dog. (See photo below.)
- Cover sharp surfaces in perforated running boards to prevent lacerations to paws.



Dog's leash has been looped through fastened seatbelt.

When possible, leash should be placed on the "dead" ring before securing the dog.

Sources

- CDC *Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Healthcare Facilities (Guidelines)*
- National Archives and Records Administration (2011). "Electronic Code of Federal Regulations." Title 28. Part 35. *Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services*.
- US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights. (2011). *Letter of Findings*.
- US Department of Justice (2010). "Animals, Revised ADA Requirements*."*
- US Department of Justice (2011). "Fact Sheet: Highlights of the Final Rule to Amend the Dept of Justice Regulation Implementing Title II of ADA."

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