



**STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE**  
**SAN JUAN ISLAND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**  
SAN JUAN COUNTY PUBLIC HOSPITAL DISTRICT NO.1

**Ground Transport of Service Animals**

**SOG #  
139-10**

**Approved: Chief Jim Cole**

**ISSUED  
12/22/2010**

**PURPOSE:**

EMS may encounter patients who are assisted by service animals, including guide dogs for the visually impaired and other types of service animals assisting persons with disabilities. Because of conflict between the nature of the services we provide and the federally mandated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and its potential penalties and liability, decisions may be required as to whether or not a patient and a service animal should be separated in any particular situation involving patients with such animals. This protocol establishes a bias in such situations in favor of ADA requirements for allowing service animals to accompany disabled patients.

**GUIDELINES**

The overwhelming factor which must govern the EMS provider's determination on transporting a service animal is the agency's requirement to comply with the ADA, weighed against any objectively real risk to the patient or crew. Due to ADA regulations, only clear and compelling concerns for the patient or crew member's safety should be utilized in denying transport of any service animal (within the squad). **Absent of documentation of clear and compelling circumstances supported by objective factual criteria, the service animal and patient should remain together for ground transport.**

Personnel should be guided by this guideline in determining whether service animals should be transported with the individual in the squad or whether alternate methods of transporting the service animal should be utilized.

**Criteria:**

Any call involving a patient with a service animal.

**Procedure**

**All Patients with Service Animals:**

Service animals, for example, guide dogs utilized by visually impaired persons or other animals assisting persons with disabilities, shall be permitted to accompany the patient in the squad unless the presence of the service animal is anticipated (based on clear and perceptible factors) to disrupt emergency or urgent patient care. If there is a clear and perceptible basis for the crew members to believe that the safety of the crew, the patient or others would be compromised by the presence of the service animal then alternate transportation must be arranged.

Personnel should assess the level of care required to provide competent medical attention to the patient and assess the service animal for transport continuity.

When all facts pertaining to the matter clearly establish that the presence of a given service animal in the squad will interfere with patient care or jeopardize the safety of the crew or the patient, arrangements should be made for simultaneous transport of the service animal to the receiving facility. In such cases, unless emergency conditions dictate otherwise, absolutely every effort must be made to reunite the patient with the service animal at the time of the patient's arrival at the destination.

Acceptable alternative methods of transporting a service animal include, but are not necessarily limited to, a family member, friends or neighbors of the patient, deputies, or an EMS professional with the agency. Attempt to obtain and document the consent of the patient for transport of the service animal by such person. If you are unable to accomplish transportation have additional manpower respond to transport the service animal.

Personnel should document on the patient care report instances where the patient utilizes a service animal, and should document on the patient care report whether or not the service animal was transported with the patient. If the service animal is not transported with the patient, **you must** document the specific clear factual circumstances under which the decision was made and the clear and compelling reasons why such decision was required under the circumstances, and you must further document the means of service animal transportation, including when the service animal was reunited with his owner, if known.