

BH & I/DD Mini Grant Program | **SERVICE ANIMAL GUIDELINES**

Managed & Administered by Information Insights on behalf of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

Service Animals (up to \$3,000):

Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and may include the purchase, assessment, and/or training of the service animal, as well as any necessary equipment and/or travel.

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority supports funding requests for service animals in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Service animals are defined as animals that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. The work or task a service animal has been trained to provide must mitigate the effects directly related to the person's disability. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Psychiatric Service Dogs (PSDs) are service dogs trained to perform tasks which mitigate an individual's psychiatric disability.

Not Funded: *Emotional Support Animals & Therapy Animals*

An emotional support animal (ESA) is an animal that has been prescribed for a person by a licensed mental health professional, sometimes referred to as comfort animals, comfort pets, or companion animals. These animals do not require specific task-training because it is the very presence of the animal that mitigates the negative symptoms associated with a person's condition. Therapy animals typically accompany their owners into institutional settings such as schools, hospitals, psychotherapy programs, and residential settings to improve the lives of other people. A therapy animal is typically a dog (but can be other species) that has been obedience-trained and screened for its ability to interact favorably with humans and other animals. Neither emotional support animals nor therapy animals are defined as service animals.

All applications must include:

- **Documentation confirming the need** for a service animal, including the specific tasks the animal will be trained to perform to mitigate functional limitations and improve the individual's quality of life. This documentation should not include a diagnosis or other protected health information but should include the professional's judgement regarding the individual's capability to handle a service animal safely and appropriately in all private and public venues.
- **Plan for maintenance and ongoing care** of the animal (regularly scheduled veterinarian checkups, shots, sterilization, feeding plan, environmental modifications (fenced yard, doggy doors, etc.) and source of funding.
 - *If the service animal is part of a tripod* (cared for by a support team), please provide the names of those individuals who will assist in controlling, managing and caring for the animal
- **If housing is a rental, verification from landlord** that the service animal is allowed to reside in the rental unit is required. Service animals in training do not have the same public access rights.
- **If housing is owned by the beneficiary or family**, the application narrative must include a statement confirming home ownership and ability to house the animal.
- **Break out of all costs**, including a list of other funding sources (it is permissible for Trust funding to be used for segments of training program or placement). The Trust should be a funder of the last resort.
- **Service Animal Training / Placement Program details**, including:
 - **Individualized training plan, placement program, and timeline** for completion of training that addresses task training, public access testing, field trips and public exposure, and plan for follow-up support after the dog completes training (this must be completed by the trainer).
 - **Credentials and experience** demonstrating the qualifications of the professional trainer, including a certificate of completion from an accredited training program, current business license, and years of experience training service dogs.
 - **Verification that a trainer has observed or evaluated the animal for task suitability**; temperament, learning, and socialization capabilities of the service animal.