

Animals in the Library policy

Policy adopted by Library Board of trustees October 11, 2016

Policy updated by Library Board of trustees June 10, 2024

Bethlehem Public Library recognizes legal rights under federal and state laws regarding use of service animals. The Library also considers the safety and health of all of its patrons, the public and Library staff to be of utmost priority.

Patrons are not permitted to bring animals into any Library building with the exception of the following:

Service Animals

In accordance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, any patron with a disability is allowed to bring their service animal into all areas of the Library where members of the public are normally allowed to go.

A service animal is defined as an animal “that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability.” The task(s) performed by the animal must be directly related to the person’s disability. Service animals in training are included in this definition.

All service animals must be under the full custody and control of their handler at all times. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal’s work or the owner’s disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the service animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls. Owners of the service animals are solely responsible for the supervision and care of the service animal. Therefore, owners must keep the service animal directly with them at all times.

Staff may ask if an animal is a pet or a service animal required because of a disability. Owners of service animals or service animals in training will indicate that they are working animals and not pets. A patron cannot be asked to remove their service animal from the Library unless the presence, behavior or actions of the service animal constitutes an unreasonable risk of injury or harm to property or other persons. In these cases, Library staff will give such patron the option to obtain Library services without having the service animal in the building.

Fear of allergies, annoyance on the part of other patrons or employees or fear of animals are generally not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people with service animals.

Library-Sponsored Programs

The Library may choose to offer educational programs for the public that include various animals. Such animals are permitted in the Library building for the duration of the program and must be accompanied by the owner at all times.

Second Read 6/10/24