

Service Dogs in Science Labs: Barriers to Inclusion



Joey Ramp-Adams
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Service Dogs in Science Labs



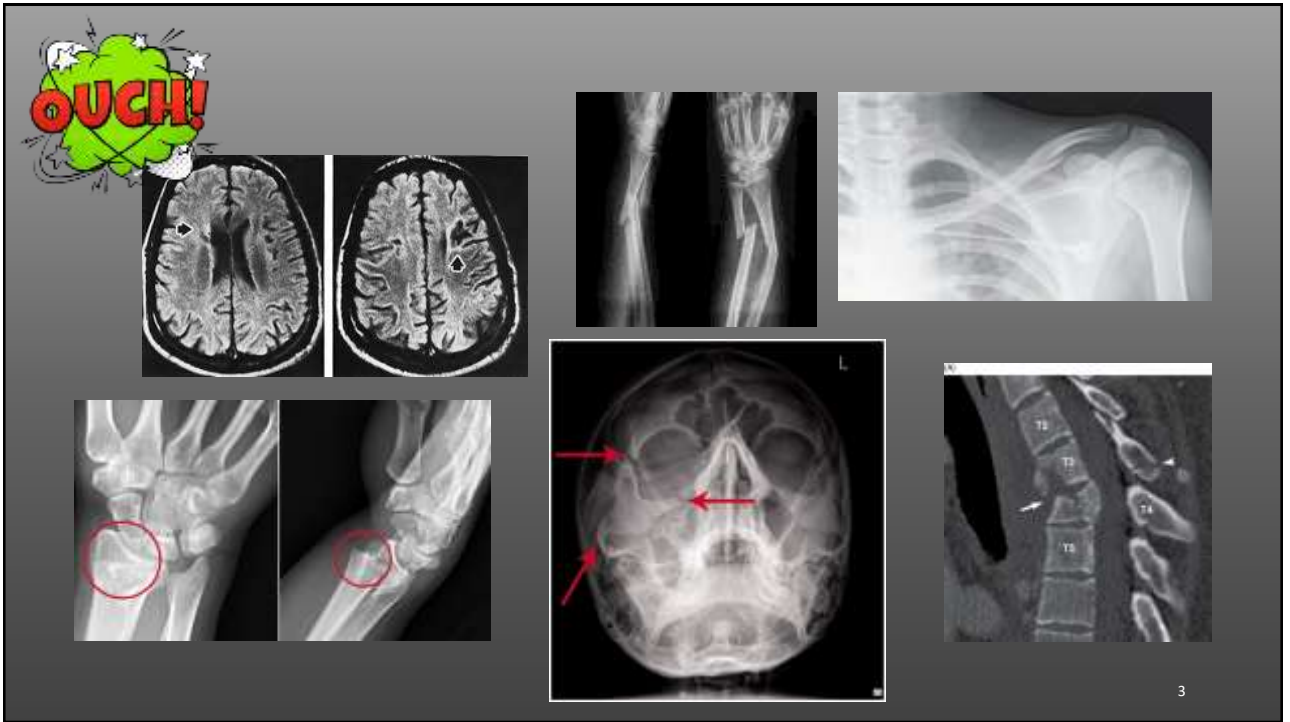


Photo courtesy of: Empower Ability Consulting <https://empowerabilityconsulting.com/>

Barriers for people with disabilities in science and STEM exist

Research has shown that science (STEM) is:

- Least flexible
- Most resistant

People with Disabilities in STEM

“Intelligence is the ability
to adapt to change”

–Stephen Hawking



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People with Disabilities in STEM



Students with disabilities in STEM fields:

- Roughly 25% of postsecondary undergraduate students majoring in STEM fields disclose having a disability.
- 10% complete undergraduate degrees.
- Graduate students with disabilities make up less than half that at ~ 6%.
- Ph.D. recipients with disabilities in STEM fields is only 2%.

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People with Disabilities in STEM



Lack of STEM role models

Students with disabilities feel unsupported by STEM faculty and administrators

Support staff, play a key role in determining the climate or culture of their departments

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Service Dogs

There has been a steady increase in the use of Service Dogs nationwide.



Photo courtesy of: Paws Giving Independence <https://givingindependence.org>

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Service Dogs



Photo courtesy of: Empower Ability Consulting <https://empowerabilityconsulting.com/>

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As of 2024:

~500,000 to 750,000 service dogs are assisting people with disabilities nationwide.

Service Dogs

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) set forth standards for service dogs as medical equipment for individuals with disabilities.



ADA Title III Regulation 28 CFR Part 36.104

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Why this topic is important!



<https://www.mifflin-schmid.com/en/index.cfm/design-work/novartis-campus-basel/alvaro-siza-novartis-laboratory-building-signage/>

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Policies and Procedures

Every educational institution and research facility should have an informed, accurate and inclusive service dog policy.

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Policies and Procedures



2020 - American
Chemical Society



2021 - American
Society of Microbiology



2021 – Office of
Laboratory Animal
Welfare

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Policies and Procedures

Empower Ability Consulting, Inc.

Title/Service/Program/Feeding and Research	Type	Key Institution
Responsible Office: Accessibility Services Office	Internal Use	Empower Ability Consulting, Inc. (Empower Ability Consulting, Inc.)
Version Number:	Version 1.0	Version 1.0

I. Program/Initiatives/Outcomes

I.1. Purpose
 (Empower Ability) has developed this program to ensure the safety of faculty, staff, students, and service dogs in teaching and research laboratories. This program applies only to service dogs (Shelter dogs) in other roles of service animals are not covered by College Administration.

I.2. Scope
 This guidance applies to College faculty, staff, administrators with disabilities (permanent or temporary) that require use of a service dog.
 This guidance is to be used in conjunction with (Service Dog) policy (Policy name) and with guidance provided by the (College/Facility) Accessibility Services Office.

II. Authority and Responsibility

II.1. The Accessibility Services Office at (College/Facility) shall be responsible for:

- II.1.1. placing students requesting the need of a service dog in a laboratory.
- II.1.2. preparing a Health Assessment/Allergy Screen (HAA) in Teaching or Research Laboratory (Health Assessment) (HAA) and submitting it to the Office of Campus Safety for report.

II.2. (College/Facility) Campus Safety shall be responsible for:

- II.2.1. providing recommendations for animal, student, and personnel safety.

II.3. (Department/Facility) Supervisor/Instructor shall be responsible for:

- II.3.1. ensuring the dog handler is following the requirements of the Health Assessment and Campus Safety recommendations.
- II.3.2. resolving the environment and responding to the situation by discussing the situation with the service animal's owner, and
- II.3.3. contacting the Accessibility Services Office to report safety problems.

II.4. Service Dog Owners shall be responsible for:

- II.4.1. reporting for service through the Accessibility Services Office Command.
- II.4.2. meeting with the department or instructor prior to the beginning of the semester to discuss recommendations.
- II.4.3. ensuring that the dog has received the proper training.
- II.4.4. following the guidelines and requirements provided in the Health Assessment and (College/Facility).
- II.4.5. providing any necessary personal protective equipment for the dog and
- II.4.6. ensuring the dog is well behaved and does not cause a disruption, disturbance, or injury to others in the area.

Access: (Empower Ability) Consulting and Research
 Information: (Empower Ability) Consulting
 Page: 1 of 1
 (Empower Ability)

Having policies and procedures in place provides guidelines and removes the mystery and ambiguity.

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Barriers

Barriers presented by the system:

- Lack of informed inclusive service dog policies.
- Understanding what a reasonable accommodation in a laboratory looks like.
- Implicit Bias.
- A lack of understanding on service dog training.
- A lack of understanding on disabilities in general.
- Inaccessible laboratories – physical barriers.

Barriers navigated by the handler:

- Understanding how to navigate the system for accommodations.
- Understanding what accommodations are needed.
- Outfitting their service dog with appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Ensuring their dog is trained to work in a laboratory setting.

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Solutions

Inclusion policy could include a set of skills necessary for an incoming service dog and made available to incoming student or employee service dog handlers.



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Solutions



Service dog's placement:

- A bench where the dog will not be tripped over or stepped on.
- A bench near the perimeter of the room.
- Within reach or direct sight of their handler.
- Kept away from very loud equipment unless wearing ear protection.
- Opposite side of room from fume hood.
- On a rubber backed mat.

Solutions



Accommodations can be easily made by:

- Having the service dog wear the required PPE.
- Establishing a safe zone for the service dog to rest within reach or direct line of sight of their handler during laboratory participation.

Link: <https://www.customdogcoats.com/labcoat>

Solutions



There should be a minimum of one recessed accessible bench per laboratory room outlined by the ADA.

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Solutions



Some equipment or reagents can be easily moved to a bench or station within reach of the handler.

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Solutions



Fact: Accommodations are being made for the student, and not for the service dog.

In some cases, a service dog handler may choose not to bring their service dog into the lab space.

This does not negate the need for the service dog!

Policies and Procedures

Include service dog handlers, who are scientists, in the development of laboratory policies to ensure a process of collaboration and joint deliberation.



Policies and Procedures



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Policies and Procedures

Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories

6th Edition



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Institutes of Health

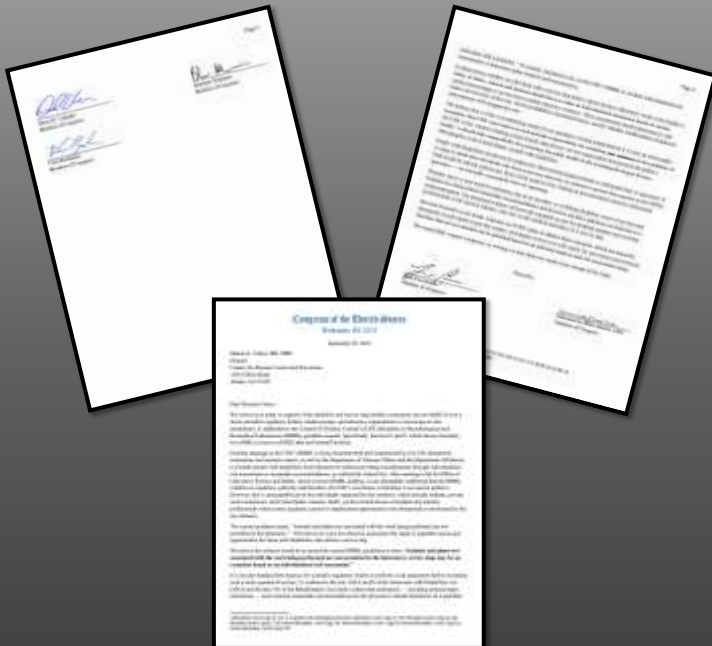
Forward: "We wish to emphasize that the sixth edition of BMBL remains an advisory document recommending best practices for the safe conduct of work in biomedical and clinical laboratories from a biosafety perspective. The BMBL is **not intended to be a regulatory document** although we recognize that some may use it in that way."

Dr. Brandon Hatcher, Director, Office of Laboratory Safety, "*the BMBL is a guidance document, not a regulation.....An institution's risk assessment should drive the decision to let service animals into a laboratory.... any feedback from the community is considered for **future editions** or updates.*"

"Animals and plants not associated with the work being performed are not permitted in the laboratory; **service dogs may be an exception based on an individualized risk assessment,**"

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Policies and Procedures



Policies and Procedures



Case Study

Animal Facilities and Service Dogs



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Animal Research Laboratories and Vivarium's

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Case Study

Animal Facilities and Service Dogs



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Case Study



IACUC Responsibilities Regarding Service Animals



OLAW Webinar
June 10, 2021

Axel Wolff, DVM, MS, NIH/OLAW
Ron Banks, DVM, University of Oklahoma HSC

Akst 2018

https://youtu.be/o4w2c8kpaX4?si=e-lIFRcn9lUqKZ_S

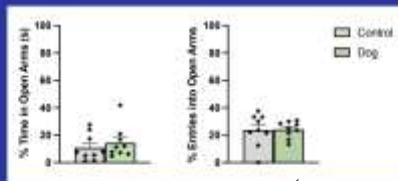
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Case Study

Experiment 1: Anxiety-like Behavior

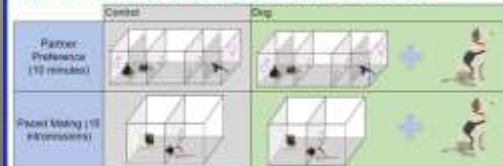


Experiment 1: Anxiety-like Behavior



No differences!

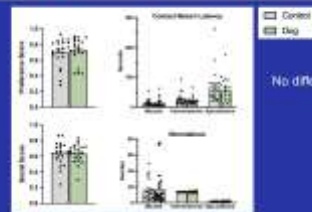
Experiment 2: Social & Sexual Behavior



Partner Preference Measures
Preference for Male
Social Score

Paced Mating Measures
Contact-Return Latency
Number of Stimulations

Experiment 2: Social & Sexual Behavior



No differences!

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INSISTENT

The Powerful Bond that Fueled
a Global Fight for Inclusion



Joey Ramp-Adams

INSISTENT

Insistent is a powerful memoir of resilience, advocacy, and the unbreakable bond between a woman and her service dog. Together, they shattered barriers, reshaped policies, and sparked a movement that reached from classrooms to Congress.

In all major bookstores August 26,
2025!

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Risk Assessment

Risk
Assessment



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Solutions



Solutions:

1. Develop inclusive laboratory safety guidelines/policies for service dog handlers.
2. Develop these guidelines with an informed source familiar with service dogs training, disability, and science laboratory hazards and compliance.
3. Minimize personal bias and effectively provide more solid guidelines for objective decision making.
4. Conduct a consistent formatted risk assessment for reasonable accommodations.
5. Develop skills checklist and protocol for service dog handlers entering a laboratory setting.
6. Provide adequate training on disabilities and service dog etiquette to all staff members.

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Service Dogs in Science Labs: Barriers to Inclusion

Opportunities, not obstacle. Breakthroughs, not barriers. Solutions, not situations.



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Empower Ability Consulting, Inc.



Experienced Disability Access
Personal Consulting

<https://empowerabilityconsulting.com>

Joey-ramp@empowerabilityconsulting.com

(800) 929-1437

PDF Risk Assessment Tool:

<https://empowerabilityconsulting.com>

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Resources:

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