



Policy Name: Service Animal Policy-Brunswick Center Services

Effective Date: September 2025

Revision Date:

Intent

It is the policy of Brunswick Center Services (BCS) to ensure that individuals supported by The Arc of Rensselaer County have equal access to transportation when accompanied by service animals. This policy reflects requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidance, and establishes consistent expectations for staff, drivers, and riders. Service animals are recognized as an essential support for many individuals with disabilities. They are to be treated with respect and permitted on all vehicles used in the provision of transportation at BCS.

Definition of a Service Animal

- A service animal is defined under the ADA as a dog, or in limited cases a miniature horse, that is individually trained to perform tasks or do work for the benefit of an individual with a disability.
- Tasks may include, but are not limited to: guiding individuals who are blind, alerting individuals who are deaf, providing mobility assistance, detecting and responding to seizures, or performing other duties directly related to a disability.
- Emotional support, therapy, or comfort animals that are not trained to perform specific tasks do not meet the ADA definition of a service animal.

Control of the Animal

- Service animals must be under the control of the owner at all times.
- Control may be maintained through verbal commands, hand signals, or other effective means.
- A leash, harness, or tether is not required if it interferes with the animal's work or the owner's disability prevents its use.
- Drivers and staff are not responsible for holding, managing, or securing a service animal's leash or harness. Care of the animal is the responsibility of the owner.

Responsibilities of Drivers and Staff

- Drivers will allow service animals to accompany riders on any BCS transportation vehicle.
- Drivers are not responsible for feeding, toileting, or handling service animals.
- If the role of the animal is not obvious, staff may ask the two ADA-permitted questions:
 1. Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
 2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

Staff may not require medical documentation, proof of training, or identification for the service animal. Any service animal accompanying a participant will be documented by BCS administration in accordance with this guidance.

Allergies and Fear of Animals

- Allergies or fear of service animals are not valid reasons to deny transportation.
- Staff may adjust seating arrangements when feasible, but service animals must be permitted to ride with the individual they support.

Grounds for Exclusion

A service animal may only be excluded from BCS transportation if:

- The animal is out of control and the rider does not take effective action to control it; or
- The animal is not housebroken.
- The animal is not fully vaccinated.

In these cases, the rider will still be transported without the animal.

*Comfort animals and pets are not covered under the ADA and are not permitted on BCS vehicles.

Staff Training

- All BCS transportation staff will receive training on this policy and on the appropriate procedures when transporting riders with service animals.
- Supervisors are responsible for ensuring adherence to this policy, coaching staff when questions arise, and addressing any incidents.