

GRATIOT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**RESOLUTION TO APPROVE
SERVICE ANIMALS POLICY**

**RESOLUTION NUMBER 26-429
ADOPTED MAY 19, 2026**

WHEREAS the Americans with Disabilities Act provides a comprehensive national mandate to ensure individuals with physical or mental disabilities may fully participate in society (42 USC 12101 *et seq.*); and

WHEREAS Section 502c of the Michigan Penal Code requires that public policies, practices, and procedures shall permit the use of a service animal by a person with a disability and shall permit the use of a service animal in training by an animal raiser or trainer (MCL 750.502c); and

WHEREAS responsibility for assuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of County employees, as well as the public visiting County facilities, falls to the Board of Commissioners; and

WHEREAS the Board seeks to establish rules consistent with state and federal laws.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Gratiot County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts the attached policy for service animals in the workplace.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this policy supersedes all previous service animal policies and/or past practices which are hereby rescinded.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this policy shall have immediate effect.

The resolution set forth was offered by Commissioner _____ and supported by Commissioner

A majority of the members-elect having approved such resolution deems the resolution APPROVED.

STATE OF MICHIGAN)
)ss
COUNTY OF GRATIOT)

I certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate copy of the resolution adopted by the Gratiot County Board of Commissioners, that such resolution was duly adopted at a regular meeting held on the 19th day of May 2026, and that notice of such meeting was given as required by law.

Angie Thompson, Gratiot County Clerk

Approved:
Resolution No.

1. **PURPOSE:** Gratiot County is responsible for assuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of all employees, as well as the public visiting County facilities. In keeping with this standard, Gratiot County prohibits animals in the workplace and/or in County-owned buildings and property, with exceptions as noted in this policy. While animals may certainly have positive impact on some individuals, they can also have undesirable impacts including but not limited to animal-related allergies, fear of animals, and/or distractions that impact effective performance of work duties. Additionally, some animals pose an elevated risk of infection(s), can cause unwanted odors and property damage, and pose serious physical and mental harm if they become aggressive.
2. **AUTHORITY:**
 - 2.1 The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides a comprehensive national mandate to ensure individuals with physical or mental disabilities may fully participate in society (42 USC 12101 *et seq.*)
 - 2.2 Section 502c of the Michigan Penal Code (MCL 750.502c) requires that public policies, practices, and procedures shall permit the use of a service animal by a person with a disability and shall permit the use of a service animal in training by an animal raiser or trainer.
 - 2.3 Authority to establish rules and regulations in reference to the management of the interest and business concerns of the county is vested with the Gratiot County Board of Commissioners (MCL 46.11(m)).
3. **APPLICATION:** This policy applies to all County facilities, departments, and agencies.
4. **RESPONSIBILITY:** The County Administrator is responsible for implementation and administration of this policy.
5. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - 5.1 “*Administrator*” means the Gratiot County Administrator.
 - 5.2 “*Animal raiser or trainer*” means an individual who raises and socializes a service animal in training with the intent that the animal will become a service animal (MCL 750.502c).
 - 5.3 “*Facility*” means any building, structure, site, complex, equipment, rolling stock, roads, walks, passageways, parking lots, or other real or personal property, including the site where the property is located (28 CFR 36.104).
 - 5.4 “*Fully socialized*” means the animal will not, except under rare occasions, bark, yip, growl, or

make disruptive noises, will have a good temperament and disposition, will not show fear, will not be upset or agitated when it sees another animal, and will not be aggressive. The service animal must be fully housebroken.

- 5.5 **“Handler”** means a person accompanied by a service animal but is not being assisted or accommodated by that animal.
- 5.6 **“Otherwise under the control of”** includes, but is not limited to, voice control or signals (MCL 750.502c).
- 5.7 **“Partner”** means a person with a disability who is assisted or accommodated by a service animal.
- 5.8 **“Person with a disability”** means a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity. This includes people who have a record of such an impairment, even if they do not currently have a disability. It also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are regarded as having a disability. Person with a disability includes a veteran who has been diagnosed with one or more of the following (42 USC 12102, MCL 750.502c):
 - 5.8.1 Post-traumatic stress disorder.
 - 5.8.2 Traumatic brain injury.
 - 5.8.3 Other service-related disabilities.
- 5.9 **“Pet”** means a domestic animal kept for pleasure or companionship. Pets are not permitted in Gratiot County facilities
- 5.10 **“Service Animal”** means any dog or miniature horse that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. The crime deterrent effects of an animal’s presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition (42 USC 12104, MCL 750.502c).
- 5.11 **“Veteran”** means any of the following:
 - 5.11.1 An individual who performed military service in the armed forces for a period of more than 90 days and separated from the armed forces in a manner other than a dishonorable discharge.
 - 5.11.2 An individual discharged or released from military service because of a service-related

disability.

5.11.3 A member of a reserve branch of the armed forces at the time he or she was ordered to military service during a period of war, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge is authorized, and was released from military service in a manner other than a dishonorable discharge.

6. POLICY: It is the policy of Gratiot County to prohibit animals in the workplace and/or in County-owned buildings and property. Exceptions to this policy include service animals for a person with disabilities as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), therapy animals that are approved for direct County service to the public, and other animals that are part of an approved County function/service, within the following guidelines:

6.1 Service Animals. As defined in Section 5.10 above, service animals are welcome in all County facilities and property. Attendance at County functions, such as a class, meeting, or other event is also permitted. Employees requesting accommodation for a disability that includes a service animal must contact the Administrator about the approval process.

6.2 Therapy Animals. Therapy animals, sometimes used for emotional support, comfort, and companionship, are not considered service animals under the ADA. Therapy animals are generally not authorized for use on County premises or during the course of County employment by employees. However, limited use of therapy animals may be authorized by the Administrator if they serve a public purpose associated with the County. An example of appropriate public use would include animals used for advocacy to crime victims and witnesses.

6.3 Other Animals. Other authorized animals include those that are part of an approved County function/service, including dogs used by the Sheriff's canine unit, search and rescue team animals, etc. Household pets or other animals that do not have an approved public purpose or provide a service to the County are prohibited. Any other exceptions to this policy can only be made by the Administrator, together with the Chief Judge in instances that involve the courts.

6.4 Requirements of Service Animals, Trainees, and Their Partners/Handlers.

6.4.1 Vaccination: The animal must have current immunizations against diseases common to that type of animal. Dogs must wear a rabies vaccination tag and other licensing tags as required.

6.4.2 Health: The animal must be in good health and have good hygiene. Partners/handlers are responsible for always maintaining a clean service animal.

6.4.3 Leash: All local municipal codes require dogs to always be on a leash while in public places. Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered while in public places, unless it interferes with a service animal's work or the handler's disability prevents use of these devices. In that case, the handler must use voice, signal or other effective means to maintain control of the animal.

6.4.4 Under Control: The partner/handler must always be in full control of the animal. The care

and supervision of a service animal is solely the responsibility of its partner/handler. Service animals shall be housebroken and fully socialized. If the service animal begins to show improper behavior, the handler will act immediately to correct the animal or will remove the animal from the premises. The handler is expected to dispose of all animal waste. If an accident occurs, then it is the handler's responsibility to completely clean the area.

6.5 Employee Guidelines.

6.5.1 Allow a service animal to accompany the partner at all times and everywhere except where service animals are specifically prohibited.

6.5.2 Do not pet a service animal without the permission of the partner/handler. Petting a service animal when the animal is working distracts the animal from its duties.

6.5.3 Do not feed a service animal without the handler's permission. The service animal may have specific dietary requirements. Unusual food or food at an unexpected time may cause the animal to become ill.

6.5.4 Do not deliberately startle a service animal or attempt to separate a partner/handler from his or her service animal.

6.5.5 Employees who require a service animal must notify their department head. The employee may be required to submit a prescription/statement of need from a physician if the need for a service animal is not obvious. Employees who require accommodations under the ADA must contact the Administrator for additional guidance.

6.5.6 Employee service animals are subject to the standards required of a service animal belonging to a facility visitor.

6.5.7 When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions: (1) Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability; and (2) what work or task has the animal been trained to perform. Employees cannot ask about a person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the animal, or ask that the animal demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

6.6 Circumstances When a Service Animal Can Be Asked to Leave.

6.6.1 Disruption: If an animal exhibits disruptive (e.g., barking, running around, bringing attention to itself), poor, or unsanitary behavior, it would not be considered a trained service animal, and can be removed. If improper behavior happens repeatedly, the partner may be prohibited from bringing the animal into any county facility until the partner takes significant steps to mitigate the behavior. Mitigation can include muzzling a barking animal or refresher training for both the animal and the partner.

6.6.2 Health: Ill service animals are not allowed in public areas. A partner with an ill animal may be asked to leave county facilities.

6.6.3 Poor Hygiene or Unclean Animals: Partners with animals that are unclean may be asked to leave county facilities. Partners/handlers shall be responsible for keeping service animals clean and well-groomed, even during inclement weather seasons. An animal that becomes wet from walking in the rain or mud or from being splashed by a passing automobile but is otherwise clean should be considered a clean animal. Animals that shed in the spring shall be groomed to maintain a hair-free work environment.

6.7 Prohibited Access for Service Animals.

6.7.1 Mechanical Rooms and Custodial Closets: Mechanical rooms, such as boiler rooms, facility equipment rooms, electric closets, elevator control rooms and custodial closets, are off-limits to service animals. The machinery and/or chemicals in these rooms may be harmful to animals.

6.7.2 Areas where Protective Clothing is Necessary: Any room where protective clothing is necessary is off-limits to service animals. Examples include chemical laboratories, wood shops, and metal/machine shops.

6.7.3 Areas Where There is Danger to Service Animals. Any room where there are sharp metal cuttings or other sharp objects on the floor or protruding from a surface, where there are hot materials on the floor, where there is a high level of dust, or where there is moving machinery are off-limits to service animals.

6.7.4 Access Exceptions

- a. Moving Equipment: A manager of an operation/facility with moving equipment may grant a team permission to enter the area with moving machinery. Admission for each team will be granted or denied on a case-by-case basis. The final decision shall be made based on the nature of the machinery or class and in the best interests of safety for the team. Example: The machinery in a shop may have moving parts at a height such that the tail of a large dog could easily be caught in it; this is a valid reason for keeping large dogs out. However, a very small hearing dog may be shorter than any moving part and, therefore, considered for admission to the area.
- b. Case-by-Case: Elected officials and department heads may grant access to other designated off-limits areas on a case-by-case basis.
- c. Approval for Exceptions: To be granted an exception, a visitor seeking admission to an off-limits area should contact the Administrator, applicable elected official, or department head.

6.8 Liability. Any property damage, destruction or personal injuries caused by or because of the service animal will be the sole responsibility of the service animal's owner/partner/handler. By

bringing a service animal onto County property, the service animal owners/partners/handlers agree to hold harmless Gratiot County and its agents from any claims, causes of actions, damages, costs, loss of service, expenses and compensation growing out of consequences with their service animal in or around Gratiot County facilities or county grounds.

6.9 Emergency Situations. In an emergency, county employees should understand that a service animal may become disoriented from the smell of smoke, sirens, wind noise, or from shaking and moving ground. The partner and/or animal may be confused by the stressful situation. Employees should be aware that the animal is trying to be protective and, in its confusion, is not to be considered harmful. Employees should make every effort to keep the animal with its partner. However, the employee's first effort should be toward the partner and this may necessitate leaving an animal behind in certain emergency evacuation situations.

6.10 Violations. Violations of this policy by employees may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Reasonable behavior is expected from animals that have been approved to be on County premises. If improper behavior happens repeatedly, the partner may be told not to bring the animal into any facility until the partner takes significant steps to mitigate the behavior. Disruptive and aggressive animals may be prohibited from Gratiot County facilities altogether depending on the situation.

7. **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**: The County Administrator shall be responsible for the development, revision, and implementation of any associated administrative procedures not already stated in this policy.

8. **ADMINISTRATOR AND LEGAL COUNSEL REVIEW**: The County Administrator shall approve all new and amended policies as to substance. County Counsel shall approve all new and amended policies as to legal content. These approvals shall accompany draft policies and amended policies submitted to the Board of Commissioners for consideration.