



**MetroWest  
Center For  
Independent Living**

## People with Disabilities Living in the Community



Dear Paul,

We want to share a couple of articles with you.

The first article is about issues with Service Dogs. Lori from Natick brought this dilemma to our attention in response to the "Got News?" request.

The second article is about our new Transition to Adulthood Program and the Coordinator, Sarah Gostenik.

Hope to see you Friday in Gardner!

Sincerely,

Paul W. Spooner, Executive Director  
MetroWest Center for Independent  
Living

### Got News?

Lori Zalt from Natick has Service Dog issues. Lori gives seminars on ADA Service Dog laws to area hospitals, so she knows the law. But,

### 2014 ADA Celebration!

When:

Friday, July 25, 11-3

Where:

Dunn Pond State  
Park, Gardner

Download the [flyer](#) for  
more information.



### In This Issue

[Got News?](#)

[TAP Coordinator](#)

### MWCIL



MetroWest Center  
for Independent  
Living

Website: [www.mwcil.org](http://www.mwcil.org)

Email: [info@mwcil.org](mailto:info@mwcil.org)

knowing the law hasn't prevented frequent discrimination against her and her service dog. Lori does not have vision impairment, and her dog does not wear a vest, but we're pretty sure that all service dog owners face discrimination. Lori and her dog have been refused entry on multiple occasions, and she says that even many police do not know the ADA laws.

## Federal ADA Requirements for Service Animals

(See the [website](#)).

Definition of a Service Animal:

Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.

Where Service Animals are Allowed:

State and local governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations that serve the public generally must allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of the facility where the public is normally allowed to go.

Inquiries and Exclusions:

When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform. Staff cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task. A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises unless: (1) the dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it or (2) the dog is not housebroken. When there is a legitimate reason to ask that a service animal be removed, staff must offer the person with the disability the opportunity to obtain goods or services without the animal's presence.

## MA Information about Service Animals

The [website](#) expands upon the ADA regulations with questions and answers about specific situations.

How can I tell if an animal is really a service animal and not just a pet?

Phone: (508)875-7853

Address: 280 Irving  
Street  
Framingham, MA 02702

Facebook: 

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Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars and harnesses. Some, but not all, are licensed or certified and have identification papers. If you are not certain that an animal is a service animal, you are allowed to ask the two questions defined by the federal rules. You cannot ask for documentation or certification that it is a service animal.

Lori is correct, and *her service dog does not have to wear a vest or collar*. Unfortunately, if you google the news using "service animal", multiple stories, just from the past week, will come up detailing people with disabilities being denied access to a location with their dog.

The excuse that is most often heard is that many people are pretending that their dog is a service animal so that they can bring them everywhere. A dog that is being "held, carried, kissed, or playing with other dogs" is almost certainly not a service dog. And in fact there are websites that will sell you credentials from the Service Dog Registry (which does not exist!). While this fraud seems harmless on the surface, particularly with a well-mannered dog, it reduces the credibility of people who rely on their service dogs, and increases the type of discrimination that Lori is facing. Also, the untrained, fake service dog may try to play with a service dog, which is a dangerous distraction. People with disabilities have service dogs so that they can be more independent. They may also love their dogs, but in fact, these animals have a job to do, and are not pets.

Businesses in San Fransisco (see [article](#)) posted signs warning patrons that "fraudulently misrepresenting service animals is a misdemeanor" which seemed to help.

What is the answer?

Lori suggested that the ADA needs to be more restrictive, and come up with a mechanism to identify service dogs and their owners - maybe a non-copyable dog tag, or license such as a driver's license.

The second piece is that more education is needed for businesses. Besides the mistrust that the service animals are real, many businesses simply do not know the rules.

Letter from Lori

"Hi, My name is Lori Zalt I am disabled. I am also on the committee for disability in Natick, Mass. I am concerned with disabled people with service dogs. Everywhere I seem to go there's an on going problem with having my service dog. I am hard of hearing and have seizures. My service dog is trained and is not required to have a vest, on the dog. but it seems to be not enough as most businesses don't know the ADA laws, and too many people think you have to have a vest on the dog. It is easy to buy a vest for just any dog, which is happening, so people with no reason to have a service dog say their dog is a service dog. I have letters from 2 doctors saying i have service dog and need one to live a independent life. There should be something that protects real disabled people that need service dogs, because ADA law is not clear on how to ID a real service dog, in which causes harassment towards a disabled person with a service dog from businesses. Businesses always ask where is the vest. A vest is not required and a lot police do not know The ADA laws for service animals. Please help in refining or redesigning this law. Lori Zalt  
Natick disability committee. "

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## ***Send us your ideas!***

This monthly section is for news and comments *from our readers*. You can suggest something for us to pursue, or give your opinion on a topic (relevant to people with disabilities of course), or let us know of what is working and what needs improvement in the community. Please email Sue at [srorke@mwCIL.org](mailto:srorke@mwCIL.org).

*Thanks!*

## **TAP at MWCIL**

We're excited to announce the new Transition to Adulthood Program (TAP) and our coordinator, Sarah Gostenik. The program is for any high school student who is:

- Aged 14-22 and enrolled in special education, regardless of the type of disability and
- Desires to learn independent living and self-advocacy skills

Sarah recently spent several days (July 14 - 17 at Bridgewater State) at the [Massachusetts Youth](#)

[Leadership Forum](#), an overnight conference by MA Easter Seals for youth with disabilities who want to participate in their communities, join the workforce and become successful adults. The forum helps students in their final two years of high school make the transition to higher education or work and provides them with resources that will be useful to them as adults. The statewide TAP coordinators had a chance to swap information and receive beautiful artwork made by students from EPIC.



Any person would be exhausted after the conference, but Sarah went on to participate in the annual Special Olympics Fundraiser: Over the Edge. After raising at least \$1000, participants *get to* rappel down the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Boston. Many, many, many stories high. I would rather pay to NOT rappel down the Hyatt Regency. Many of us would be height challenged by the EconoLodge in Framingham. Kudos to Sarah!



[www.mwcil.org](http://www.mwcil.org)  
MetroWest Center for Independent Living  
280 Irving Street  
Framingham, Massachusetts 01702  
(508) 875-7853

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