

Pets in the Workplace

People love their pets. As a result, we are seeing more and more pets, especially dogs, being taken on planes, to stores, and even into the workplace. A pet friendly workplace may be a perk or a recruitment tool for some organizations; however, there are numerous things, such as liability, to consider before allowing pets into the workplace. Pets should not be allowed without strict guidelines detailing what behavior is acceptable from both the pet and the pet owner.

People Come First

As a general rule of thumb when making decisions about allowing pets on the job, people come first. If an employee is allergic to animals then asking other employees to leave their pets at home is a reasonable accommodation for the allergic employee under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Other possible accommodations for allergies are creating sufficient separation between the pet and the allergic person, increasing ventilation, or limiting the pet to certain areas. Please note that a service dog or service miniature horse is not a pet. These types of service animals are allowed under the ADA and cannot be banned from the workplace even if all other animals are banned.

Liability Concerns

Before an employee is allowed to bring a pet to the workplace, they should be required to verify in writing that they have sufficient insurance, home owner's or renter's, to cover any damage caused by the pet. Consider asking the employee to sign a paycheck deduction authorization to cover any potential property damage (e.g., carpet cleaning) caused by his or her

pet. Also consider that additional insurance may be needed to protect the county from potential lawsuits that may result if a member of the public is injured on county property by an employee's pet.

Additional Considerations

In addition to allergies and liability concerns, consideration must also be giving to pet health, cleanliness, employee breaks to care for the pet, etc. Pets brought into work should be licensed, up-to-date on their vaccinations, and free of fleas, ticks, or other parasites. Designate areas where the pet can go to the bathroom and make sure that the pet owner knows that they are responsible for picking up after their pet and disposing of the waste appropriately. Will the employee be allowed extra breaks to take their pet outside to use the bathroom or for walks? Should the pet be kept on a leash or confined when there are visitors to the workplace? These are a few of the additional considerations that come with allowing pets in a work environment.

What This Means for Counties

Because of the risks involved with bringing pets into the workplace, CTSI does not recommend it. Bringing a pet to work has the potential to be a distraction and, in the case of a poorly behaved pet, endanger employees. For more information about the risks of bringing a pet to work, please contact CTSI at 303 861 0507. [ctsi](http://www.ctsi.org)