

Draft "No Pets" Policy

In keeping with the objective of providing a safe, healthy, and productive work environment for all employees, Burnet County does not permit employees to bring their household pets to work.

This decision is to cover the following:

- Potential health risks and allergies: Animals can pose a risk of infection or cause allergic reactions in sensitive individuals.
- Safety concerns: Some employees may be afraid or feel threatened by the presence of animals, especially dogs.
- Disruptions to the work environment: Animals can be a distraction or cause noise disruptions.
- Cleanliness and property damage: Animals may foul the office space or cause damage to county property.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects service animals, which are defined as dogs (and in some cases, miniature horses) individually trained to perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Texas law mirrors the federal ADA in prohibiting discrimination against individuals using service animals. The exception to this policy is:

- Assistance animals (as defined in the Texas Human Resources Code, Section 121.002), accompanying employees, contractors, or visitors are permitted in the workplace.

While the ADA provides protections for service animals, it's important to understand that emotional support animals (ESAs) are not considered service animals under the ADA and are not granted the same legal protections. [According to the Office of the Texas Governor](#), businesses are generally not obligated to accommodate emotional support animals if they have a "no pets" policy.

However, Burnet County may choose to allow emotional support animals as a reasonable accommodation in the workplace, depending on the specific circumstances and if it doesn't create undue hardship or disruption.

It is illegal to misrepresent the use of an animal as a service animal; this includes falsely using a harness or leash that identifies a specially trained service animal. Misrepresenting an animal as a service animal is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$1000 and 30 hours of community service.