

Sample Letter from Health Care Provider (Your provider may want to use for reference.)

[LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

To Whom It May Concern:

[PATIENT'S NAME] is my patient and has been under my care since [DATE].

She/he has a disability as defined by the federal Fair Housing Act and/or the Maine Human Rights Act. I am intimately familiar with his/her history and with the functional limitations imposed by his/her disability.

This disability causes these effects: [LIST SYMPTOMS] which would be mitigated by a service animal. I am therefore prescribing a service animal that [PATIENT'S NAME] needs to enhance his/her ability to live independently and that [PATIENT'S NAME] needs to allow him/her an equal opportunity to use and enjoy his/her dwelling.

Sincerely,

[HEALTH CARE PROVIDER/LICENSED SOCIAL WORKER]
[CREDENTIALS]

Definitions

The federal Fair Housing Act defines disability as “(1) a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person’s major life activities, (2) a record of having such an impairment, or (3) being regarded as having such an impairment.” 42 U.S.C. § 3062(h).

The Maine Human Rights Act defines disability as “A physical or mental impairment that: (1) Substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities; (2) Significantly impairs physical or mental health; or (3) Requires special education, vocational rehabilitation or related services;” and people with a record of such condition or who are regarded as likely to develop any such condition.” This definition includes, “without regard to severity unless otherwise indicated: absent, artificial or replacement limbs, hands, feet or vital organs; alcoholism; amyotrophic lateral sclerosis; bipolar disorder; blindness or abnormal vision loss; cancer; cerebral palsy; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; Crohn's disease; cystic fibrosis; deafness or abnormal hearing loss; diabetes; substantial disfigurement; epilepsy; heart disease; HIV or AIDS; kidney or renal diseases; lupus; major depressive disorder; mastectomy; intellectual disability; multiple sclerosis; muscular dystrophy; paralysis; Parkinson's disease; pervasive developmental disorders; rheumatoid arthritis; schizophrenia; and acquired brain injury.” 5 M.R.S.A. § 4553-A(1). A condition “significantly impairs physical or mental health” when it has “an actual or expected duration of more than 6 months and impair[s] health to a significant extent as compared to what is ordinarily experienced in the general population.” 5 M.R.S.A. § 4553-A(1)(B).

The Maine Human Rights Act defines a service animal for the purposes of housing as “An animal that has been determined necessary to mitigate the effects of a physical or mental disability by a physician, psychologist, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner or licensed social worker; or . . . An animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a physical or mental disability, including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to intruders or sounds, providing reasonable protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair or retrieving dropped items.” 5 M.R.S.A. § 4553(9-E)