



Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Summary of CRCL's Recommendations and FPS's Response *Screening of Visitors with Service Animals*

On September 24, 2024, Federal Protective Service (FPS) responded to a Recommendation Memorandum issued in June 2024 by the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) raising concerns related to screening visitors accompanied by service animals. FPS concurred with all eight of CRCL's recommendations.

Background

Between October 2023 and March 2024, CRCL opened two complaints alleging that FPS Protective Security Officers (PSOs) improperly screened and denied access to individuals with disabilities who were accompanied by service animals at Social Security Administration offices. According to the complaints, PSOs asked inappropriate screening questions about the service animals and improperly denied the individuals access to the offices.

Investigation

Based upon the nature of the incoming allegations, CRCL investigated one complaint as potential disability discrimination in violation of Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Section 504) and the other complaint pursuant to CRCL's authority under 6 U.S.C. §345 and 42 U.S.C. § 2000ee-1. To investigate, CRCL reviewed the specific records related to the individuals denied access. CRCL also examined U.S. Department of Justice guidance and FPS policy and guidance related to screening individuals with purported service animals, including the FPS Protective Security Officer SMART Book, which contains specific procedures related to service animals.

For the Section 504 complaint, CRCL determined that FPS discriminated on the basis of disability in violation of Section 504 by failing to provide a reasonable disability modification to the complainant. In accordance with federal regulations, CRCL notified the complainant of FPS's Section 504 violation and ordered FPS to disseminate a memorandum to all PSO vendors reiterating the importance of following the PSO SMART Book protocol for screening visitors who are accompanied by service animals. For both complaints, CRCL found that the animals accompanying the individuals were service animals. CRCL also found that FPS did not follow its procedures for questioning visitors with purported service animals.

Recommendations

In addition to the letter to the complainant, on June 4, 2024, CRCL sent FPS a Recommendation Memorandum that notified FPS of the Section 504 violation, explained the remedy, and included eight recommendations regarding screening visitors accompanied by service animals. On September 24, 2024, FPS concurred with the eight recommendations.

FPS agreed to update its PSO SMART Book and ensure that PSO training highlights the PSO SMART Book guidance for interacting with individuals accompanied by service animals, including appropriate questioning. Additionally, FPS agreed to provide annual reminders to PSO vendors on the importance of following the PSO SMART Book guidance. Finally, FPS agreed to instruct PSO vendors on generating incident reports when building access is denied to individuals accompanied by alleged service animals.

CRCL provides the public with documents related to complaint investigations. After it has been prepared and reviewed, CRCL will post a redacted version of this Recommendation Memorandum on our [website](#) that will contain additional information about the complaint investigation and CRCL's findings and recommendations.