

What is a service animal?

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for title II (State and local government services) and title III (public accommodations and commercial facilities), a service animal is defined as a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The task(s) performed by the dog must be directly related to the person's disability.

Many people with disabilities use a service animal in order to fully participate in everyday life. Dogs can be trained to perform many important tasks to assist people with disabilities, such as providing stability for a person who has difficulty walking, picking up items for a person who uses a wheelchair, preventing a child with autism from wandering away, or alerting a person who has hearing loss when someone is approaching from behind. The dog must be trained to take a specific action when needed to assist the person with a disability. For example, a person with diabetes may have a dog that is trained to alert him when his blood sugar reaches high or low levels. Assisting a person with mobility issues or confined to a wheelchair by assisting with walking, getting up/down from a chair, picking up items they may drop, bringing the paper or a phone, opening doors/drawers, getting dressed, assisting with pulling a wheelchair or grocery cart. A person with depression may have a dog that is trained to remind her to take her medication. Assist a person who is hard of hearing may need a service dog to alert them if the phone rings, someone is at the door, of a nearby siren from a first responder vehicle, and the sound of a hurricane warning siren. Or, a person who has epilepsy may have a dog that is trained to detect the onset of a seizure and then help the person remain safe during the seizure.

- *A service animal must be under the control of its handler. Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless the individual's disability prevents using these devices or these devices interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of tasks. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.*
- *A person with a disability can be asked to remove their service animal from the premises if:*
 - 1) **The dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it.**
 - 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.**

Are emotional support, therapy, comfort, or companion animals considered service animals under the ADA definition?

NO! These terms are used to describe animals that provide comfort just by being with a person. Because they have not been trained to perform a specific job or task, they do not qualify as service animals under the ADA. However, some State or local governments have laws that allow people to take emotional support animals into public places.

https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

You may check with the Department of Justice, your State Attorney General's Office and other local government agencies to find out about these laws. Be advised, as of December 2, 2020 DOT Federal Law regarding Traveling by Air with Service Animals have changed.

Working Dogs Descriptions defined by the American Kennel Club (AKC)

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/lifestyle/service-working-therapy-emotional-support-dogs/>