

Can service animals be any breed of dog?

Yes. The ADA does not restrict the type of dog breeds that can be service animals.

Can individuals with disabilities be refused access to a facility based solely on the breed of their service animal?

No. A service animals may not be excluded based on assumptions or stereotypes about the animals breed or how the animal might behave. However, if a particular service animal behaves in a way that poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others, has a history of such behavior, or is not under control of the handler, that animal may be excluded. IF an animal is excluded for such reasons, staff must still offer their goods or services to the person without the animal present.

Does the ADA require that a service animal be certified as a service animals?

No. Covered entities may not require documentation, such as proof that the animal has been certified, trained or licensed as a service animal, as condition for entry. There are individuals and organizations that sell service animal certification or registration documents online. These documents do not convey any rights under the ADA and the Department of Justice does not recognize them as proof that the dog is a service animal.

Who is responsible for the care and supervision of a service animal?

The handler is responsible for caring for and supervising the service animal, which includes toileting, and grooming and veterinary care. Covered entities are not obligated to supervise or otherwise care for the service animal.

What questions can a covered entity's employees ask to determine if a dog is a service dog?

In situations where it is not obvious that the dog is a service animal, staff may ask only two specific questions: (1) Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability? (2) What work or task has the dog been trained to perform? Staff are not allowed to request any documentation for the dog, require that the dog demonstrate its task or inquire about the nature of the person's disability.

What does under control mean? Do service animals have to be on a leash? Do they have to be quiet and not bark?

The ADA required that service animals be under the control of the handler at all times. IN Most Instance, the handler will be the individual with the disability or a third party who accompanies the individual with a disability. The service animal must be leashed, harnessed, or tethered while in public places. Unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the person's disability prevents use of these devices. In that case, the person must use signal, or other effective means to maintain control of the animal. Under control also means that a service animal should not be allowed to bark repeatedly in a lecture hall, theater, library, or other quiet place. However, if a dog barks just once, or barks because someone provoked it, this would not mean that the dog is out of control.

Do service animals have to wear a vest or patch or special harness identifying them as service animals?

No. The ADA does not require service animals to wear a vest, ID tag, or specific harness.

*Complete FAQ's available at adapacific.org.



U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
Disability Rights Section

Frequently Asked Questions about Service Dogs and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

What is a service animal?

Under the ADA, 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.

What does "do work" or perform "tasks" mean?

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. A person with depression may have a dog that is trained to remind her to take her medication.

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

No. These terms are used to describe animals that provide comfort just by being with the 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 and local governments have laws that allow people to take emotional support animals into public places. You may check with your State and local government agencies to find out about these laws.

If someone’s dog calms them when having an anxiety attack, does this qualify it as a service animal?

It depends. The ADA makes a distinction between psychiatric service animals and emotional support animals. If the dog has been trained to sense that an anxiety attack is about to happen and take a specific action to help avoid the attack or lessen its impact, that would qualify as a service animal. However, if the dog’s mere presence provides comfort, that would not be considered a service animal under the ADA.

Does the ADA require service animals to be professionally trained?

No. People with disabilities have the right to train the dog themselves and are not required to use a professional service dog training program.

Are service animals in training considered service animals under the ADA?

No. Under the ADA, the dog must be already trained before it can be taken into public places. However, some States and local laws cover animals that are still in training.

Can a person bring a service animal with them as they go through a salad bar or other self-service food lines?

Yes. Service animals must be allowed to accompany their handler to and through self-serve food lines. Similarly, service animals may not be prohibited from communal food preparation areas, such as are commonly found in shelters or dormitories.

Can hotels assign designated rooms for guests with service animals, out of consideration for other guests?

No. A guest with a disability who uses a service animal must be provided the same opportunities to reserve any available room at the hotel as other guests without disabilities. They may not be restricted to “pet-friendly” rooms.

Can hotels charge a cleaning fee for guests who have service animals?

No. Hotels are not permitted to charge guests for cleaning or hair or dander shed by a service animal. However, if a guest’s service animal causes damage to a guest room, a hotel is permitted to charge the same fee for damages as charged to other guests.

Are hotel guests allowed to leave their service animal in their hotel room when they leave the hotel?

No, the dog must be under the handler’s control at all times.

Does a hospital have to allow an in-patient with a disability to keep a service animals in his or her room?

Generally, yes. Service animals must be allowed in patient rooms and anywhere else in the hospital the public and patients are allowed to go. They cannot be excluded on the grounds that staff can provide the same service.

Are stores required to allow service animals to be placed in a shopping cart?

No. Generally, the do must stay on the floor, or the person must carry the dog.

What can a business do when a service animal is being disruptive?

If a service animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it, staff may request that the animal be removed from the premises.

What happens if a person thinks a covered entity’s staff has discriminated against him or her?

Individuals who believe they have been illegally denied access or service because they use a service animal may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice. Individuals also have the right to file a private lawsuit in Federal Court charging the entity with the discrimination under the ADA.

Do apartments, mobile home parks, and other residential properties have to comply with the ADA?

The Fair Housing Act is the Federal law that protects the rights of people with disabilities in residential facilities. For information or to file a complaint, contact the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.

Do Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, have to comply with the ADA?

No. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is the Federal law that protects the rights of people with disabilities to participate in Federal programs and services. For information, or to file a complaint, contact the agency’s equal opportunity office.