

[Service Animals | ADA.gov](https://www.ada.gov/service-animals/)

The ADA explains what businesses and state/local governments must do to make sure that they do not discriminate against a member of the public with a disability who uses a service animal.

Generally, businesses and non-profits that are open to the public as well as state/local governments must allow service animals to go most places where the public can go. This is true even if they have a “no pets” policy.

About Service Animals

Service animals are:

- Dogs
- Any breed and any size of dog
- Trained to perform a task directly related to a person’s disability

Service animals are not:

- Required to be certified or go through a professional training program
- Required to wear a vest or other ID that indicates they’re a service dog
- Emotional support or comfort dogs, because providing emotional support or comfort is not a task related to a person’s disability

More about the difference between emotional support animals and service animals

Examples of Service Animal Tasks

A person who uses a wheelchair may have a dog that is **trained to retrieve objects for them.**

A person with depression may have a dog that is **trained to perform a task to remind them to take their medication.**

A person with PTSD may have a dog that is **trained to lick their hand to alert them to an oncoming panic attack.**

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.**

Where Service Animals Can Go

Generally, service animals are allowed to be with their person, even in places that don't allow pets. For example, service dogs can go into:

- Restaurants
- Shops
- Hospitals
- Schools
- Hotels

EXAMPLE: A restaurant offers indoor and outdoor seating. A woman arrives at the restaurant with her service dog and asks to sit inside. The restaurant cannot require the woman to dine outside because of her service dog.

The ADA also applies to certain types of housing, including:

- Housing at public and private universities
- Public housing programs run by state, county, and city governments
- Emergency shelters

Other laws apply to housing

The **Fair Housing Act** applies to many types of housing, both public and privately owned, including housing covered by the ADA. Under the Fair Housing Act, there may be different rules that apply when a resident or applicant with a disability uses a service animal or other animal to assist with their disability. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development is responsible for administering the Fair Housing Act. Learn more at the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) or [contact your Regional Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Office](#).

Other laws apply to airplanes

The Air Carrier Access Act, not the ADA, protects the rights of people with disabilities in air travel. For information or to file a complaint, contact the U.S. Department of Transportation, Aviation Consumer Protection Division: 202-366-2220.

Other rules apply to employment

The [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) (EEOC) is responsible for administering the ADA in employment settings.

Asking if a Dog is a Service Animal

If you are working at a business or state/local government facility and it is unclear to you whether someone's dog is a service dog, **you may ask for certain information using two questions.**

You may ask:

- Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

You are *not* allowed to:

- Request any documentation that the dog is registered, licensed, or certified as a service animal
- Require that the dog demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the person's disability

Because service animals are not required to wear vests, a dog that is wearing a vest is not necessarily a service animal. The dog still needs to be trained to perform a task for a person with a disability to be a service animal.

When a Service Animal Can Be Kept Out

A business or state/local government does not need to allow a service animal if the dog's presence would fundamentally alter the nature of the goods, services, programs, or activities provided to the public.

What does *fundamentally alter* mean?

Learn more about when a service animal can be kept out in [questions 23-26 in FAQs about service animals and the ADA](#).

Asking Someone to Remove Their Service Animal

A business or state/local government can ask someone to remove their service animal if:

- The dog is not housebroken.
- The dog is out of control, and the person cannot get the dog under control.

What does *out of control* mean?

Overview

This publication provides guidance on the term “service animal” and the service animal provisions in the Department’s regulations.

- Beginning on March 15, 2011, only dogs are recognized as service animals under titles II and III of the ADA.
- A service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability.
- Generally, title II and title III entities must permit service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas where members of the public are allowed to go.

How “Service Animal” Is Defined

Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

This definition does not affect or limit the broader definition of “assistance animal” under the Fair Housing Act or the broader definition of “service animal” under the Air Carrier Access Act.

Some State and local laws also define service animal more broadly than the ADA does. Information about such laws can be obtained from the relevant State attorney general’s office.

Inquiries, Exclusions, Charges, and Other Specific Rules Related to Service Animals

When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform. Staff cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

- Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service animals. When a person who is allergic to dog dander and a person who uses a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, for example, in a school classroom or at a homeless shelter, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room or different rooms in the facility.
- A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises unless: (1) the dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it or (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.
- Establishments that sell or prepare food must generally allow service animals in public areas even if state or local health codes prohibit animals on the premises.
- People with disabilities who use service animals cannot be isolated from other patrons, treated less favorably than other patrons, or charged fees that are not charged to other patrons without animals. In addition, if a business requires a deposit or fee to be paid by patrons with pets, it must waive the charge for service animals.
- If a business such as a hotel normally charges guests for damage that they cause, a customer with a disability may also be charged for damage caused by himself or his service animal.
- Staff are not required to provide care for or supervision of a service animal.