



Developmental Disabilities
Council of Oklahoma

This publication is provided by Developmental
Disabilities Council of Oklahoma.
405-521-4984
staff@okddc.ok.gov

Service Dogs & Other Animal Assistants

Handler's Rights & Responsibilities

Handlers can be asked only two questions regarding a service animal:

- 1) Is this animal required because of a disability?
- 2) What task has this animal been trained to do?

Service animals are not required to wear a vest or badge while working, nor does the handler have to provide a special license.

A doctor's note does not transform a pet into a service animal.

The animal should be vaccinated in accordance with state and local laws.

The handler is responsible for the care and supervision of their service animal. If a service animal behaves poorly and the person with a disability does not control the animal, a business can prohibit the animal from entering the property. Uncontrolled barking, growling, jumping, or running away from the handler are examples of unacceptable behavior.

The animal must be housebroken.

If a public accommodation (hotel or lodging) normally charges individuals for the damage they cause, an individual with a disability may be charged for damage caused by their service animal.

Numerous laws prohibit employment discrimination because of a disability. **Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation.** Allowing an individual with a disability to have a service animal or an emotional support animal accompany them to work may be considered a reasonable accommodation. Both animals can be excluded from the workplace if they pose a direct or undue hardship. An individual's right to use service animals is protected under the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**.

According to the ADA, a service animal is individually trained to perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. This includes physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual and other mental disabilities. A service animal must be **individually trained either by the person using the animal or a professional trainer** to complete specific tasks.



This is Charlie who supports a professor at the University of Oklahoma.

A service animal may accompany their handler to **any building or facility where the public, program participants, customers, or clients are allowed.**

Under the ADA, service animals are limited to dogs. However, entities must make reasonable policy modifications allowing for miniature horses, if they have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for individuals with disabilities.

Persons using emotional support or therapy animals are not entitled to the same rights as service animals under the ADA.

There is no national or state recognized certification nor training standards for service animals. Under the ADA, only a dog or a miniature horse may be service animals.

A therapy or emotional support animal does not have to be a dog or miniature horse, but these animals are not entitled to the same rights and protections as a service animal.

The Fair Housing Act (FHA) protects a person with a disability from discrimination in obtaining housing, and applies to landlords and homeowners associations. Both service animals and emotional support animals may be considered "reasonable accommodations" under the FHA.

Emotional Support & Therapy Animals

Emotional support animals (ESA) and therapy dogs are not considered service animals under the ADA. These support animals provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks assisting people with disabilities.

ESA are not required to undergo specialized training and are not limited to working with people with disabilities.

Most public settings do not have to accommodate an emotional support animal - they have no more rights than a pet.

	Service Dog	ESA	Therapy Animal
Protected under the ADA	X		
May live with owner in housing even if there is a "no pets" policy	X	X	
Visits places like hospitals and airports to provide therapeutic support to many people		X	X
Handlers encourage people to pet their dogs to encourage socializing		X	X
Are individually trained to perform specific task for person with disability	X		
Primary function is to provide daily, emotional support through companionship		X	
Subject to state laws on animal vaccinations	X	X	X