



Service Animals and Emotional Support Pets Explained

Many of our patients ask for letters in order to allow their pets to be with them in areas they are not normally allowed. Examples include requesting a letter allowing a pet to live with them in an apartment that does not allow pets.

It is important to understand the law. Legal standards are established by the Department of Justice and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Two criteria must be met in order for an individual to be granted a service dog exemption:

- The individual must have a disability recognized by the ADA (examples include a person who is deaf, blind, or in a wheelchair)
- The service dog must be trained to perform a specific task for the individual

Dogs classified as **service animals are individually trained to perform a specific task that assists a person with a disability**. Service dogs are legally permitted anywhere that visitors can go. They must be allowed wherever visitors are allowed.

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.

Emotional support, therapy, and companion animals are not service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), they have not been trained to provide a task directly related to a disability. Emotional support animals are considered to be a pet.