

Air Travel with Service Animals



Here are some important things
to know before you go...

What qualifies as a service animal?



Under the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) a service animal is any animal that is individually trained or able to provide assistance to a qualified person with a disability; or any animal that assists qualified persons with disabilities by providing emotional support. Documentation may be required of passengers needing to travel with an emotional support or psychiatric service animal.

Which animals may board as service animals?



A wide variety of service animals are permitted onboard aircraft flying to and within the United States; however, most service animals tend to be dogs and cats. Unusual animals are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Airlines may exclude animals that:

- ✘ **Are too large or heavy** to be accommodated in the cabin;
- ✘ **Pose a direct threat** to the health or safety of others;
- ✘ **Cause a significant disruption** of cabin service; or
- ✘ **Are prohibited from entering a foreign country.**

Airlines are **never required** to accept snakes, reptiles, ferrets, rodents, and spiders.

What are the acceptance criteria?



For service animals

Airlines can determine whether an animal is a service animal or pet by:

- ✓ The credible verbal assurances of a qualified individual with a disability using the animal;
- ✓ Looking for physical indicators such as the presence of a harness or tags;
- ✓ Requiring documentation for psychiatric support animals and emotional support animals; and
- ✓ Observing the behavior of animals.

For emotional support and psychiatric service animals

Airlines can request specific documentation and/or 48-hours advance notice for emotional support animals and psychiatric service animals.

What are the acceptance criteria?



Documentation should not be older than one year from the date of your scheduled initial flight and must state:


- ✓ You have a mental or emotional disability that is recognized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM);
- ✓ You need your emotional support or psychiatric support animal as an accommodation for air travel and/or for activity at your destination;
- ✓ The individual providing the assessment is a licensed mental health professional and passenger is under his/her professional care; and
- ✓ The licensed health care professional's;
 - ⊕ Date and type of professional license; and
 - ⊕ Jurisdiction or state in which their license was issued.

Ready to travel?







Here are a few things to keep in mind while at the airport and onboard the aircraft:

At the airport




-  If your animal needs to relieve itself, please ask an airport or airline professional for the location of the nearest animal relief areas.

Onboard the aircraft

-  Your animal must be permitted to accompany you in the space under the seat in front of you.
-  Certain small animals may be permitted to sit on your lap, if it can be done so safely.
-  Your animal cannot block a space that must remain unobstructed for safety reasons (e.g. an aisle or access to an emergency exit).
-  An airline is not required to upgrade you to a different class of service to accommodate your animal.

Ready to travel?



-  Airlines cannot refuse to allow your animal onboard because it makes other passengers or flight crew uncomfortable.
-  Your animal must behave properly. An animal that engages in disruptive behavior (e.g. barking or snarling, running around, and/or jumping onto other passengers, etc. without being provoked) will not be accepted as a service animal.
-  For a flight that is scheduled for eight hours or longer, airlines may require documentation stating that your animal will not need to relieve itself, or can do so in a sanitary way.

Traveling outside of the United States?



Here are a few things to keep in mind if you're planning to fly outside of the United States with your service animal.

- 💡 **Foreign carriers operating to and from** the United States are only required to accept dogs.
- 💡 **US carriers traveling to foreign countries** are subject to the requirements of that foreign country regarding acceptance of service animals; not all countries permit service animals from other foreign countries.
- 💡 **Check to ensure whether your destination country** permits your animal and any other requirements in order to enter and exit legally.

Contact Us

DOT's Disability Hotline

1-800-778-4838

Monday – Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm

Eastern Time except federal holidays

Visit Us

www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/disability



**U.S. Department
of Transportation**

14 CFR Part 382 applies to flights operating to, from, or within the United States of America.