

Air Carrier Access Act
Taken from the US Department of Transportation

While the Americans with Disabilities Act covers airports and terminals, the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) covers the airline, the services they provide, and the airplane itself. All U.S. air carriers' operations and airplanes are covered by the ACAA. All foreign air carriers' flights that begin or end at U.S. airports and the aircraft being used on these flights are covered by the ACAA.

Under the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) a service animal is any animal that is individually trained or able to provide assistance to a person with a disability; or any animal that assists 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 service animals are allowed in the cabin?

- A wide variety of service animals are permitted in the cabin portion of the aircraft flying to and within the United States; however, most service animals tend to be dogs and cats. 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.

Note: Airlines are never required to accept snakes, reptiles, ferrets, rodents, sugar gliders, and spiders.

How do airlines determine whether an animal is a service animal?

- Airlines can determine whether an animal is a service animal or pet by:
 - The credible verbal assurances of an individual with a disability using the animal;
 - If airline personnel are not certain of the animal's status, even after being told that an animal is a service animal, additional questions may be asked, including:
 - What tasks or functions does your animal perform for you?
 - What has the animal been trained to do for you?
 - Would you describe how the animal performs this task or function for you?
 - 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.

- Emotional Support and Psychiatric Service Animals - Airlines can request specific documentation and/or 48-hours advanced notice for service animals that are emotional support animals and psychiatric service animals.

What kind of documentation can be required of persons travelling with emotional support animals and psychiatric service animals?

- Airlines may require documentation that is not older than one year from the date of your scheduled initial flight that states:
 - 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 the 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.

Tips for Traveling with a Service Animal

At the airport

- If your animal needs to relieve itself, please ask an airport or airline professional for the location of the nearest service 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 (ex. 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.
- 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 (ex. 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 airlines operating to and from the United States are only required to accept dogs.
- U.S. airlines 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 to enter and exit legally.

Encounter A Problem?

- If you believe your rights under the Air Carrier Access Act are being or have been violated, ask to speak with a Complaints Resolution Official (CRO). A CRO is the airline's expert on disability accommodation issues. Airlines are required to make one available to you, at no cost, in person at the airport or by telephone during the times they are operating.