

Know Your Rights: Air Travel with Disability Support Animals

The Department of Transportation announced new rules for disability support animals on airplanes. They announced the new rules on December 2, 2020. Here are some important things you need to know about these new rules. To read the full rule, [click here](#).

This fact sheet has some words that are **bold and blue**. Words that are **bold and blue** are important Words to Know. You can read the definition of these words at the end of the fact sheet.

The ACAA is different from the ADA.

The Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) covers your rights on airplanes. It is different from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Your rights on planes may be different from:

- your rights at home
- your rights at work
- your rights at restaurants
- your rights in hotels
- your rights in other public places

That means, the rules about having a disability support animal on a plane might be different from the rules in other places.

Emotional Support Animals Might Not Be Allowed On Planes.

An **Emotional Support Animal (ESA)** is an animal that helps you handle stress or other feelings. ESAs are *not* trained to do anything to help you. Instead, the ESA helps you just by being there.

The new rule doesn't protect ESAs. An airline might still allow ESAs on planes. But it does not have to.

Your animal might still be protected if it is a **dog** that has been **trained to do something to help you**. This includes helping you manage stress or emotions. These dogs can be considered service dogs. For example, a dog who sees when you are stressed and does something to help you feel better can be a **service dog**.

Otherwise, if you want to fly with an ESA, it can be treated as a pet. You might have to pay a pet fee. You might not be able to fly with some kinds of animals. It will depend on the rules at each airline.

The Fair Housing Act still protects emotional support animals. People with disabilities still have a right to live with an emotional support animal, if they need the animal to help with a disability.

Service Dogs Are Still Allowed On Planes.

A **service dog** is a dog that is **trained** to do something to help you. This may include:

- Guide dogs
- Service dogs who help Deaf people
- Psychiatric service dogs
- Dogs who help people with mobility disabilities
- Autism service dogs
- Seizure alert dogs

To be allowed on planes, service dogs **have to**:

- Be trained to act polite in public. They cannot bite, bark, or jump on people.
- Be housebroken. They cannot make a mess on the floor.
- Be trained to do at least one thing to help with your disability.
- Be leashed or harnessed and under control.
- Be able to fit under your seat or in your lap (unless you buy a seat with more room, or an extra seat).
- Have their rabies shot and be free from fleas or ticks.

Service dogs **do not have to:**

- Have a special license or certificate.
- Be trained by an official service dog trainer
- Be an “approved” breed. Airlines cannot deny access because your dog is a breed they don’t like, like a pit bull or German Shepherd.

Each disabled person can have up to **two** service dogs.

What information do I need to provide?

If you bring a service dog on the plane, airlines can ask you for a special form. There are two forms you may need. One is called a **Health, Behavior and Training Form**. The other is called a **Relief Attestation**.

Both of these forms should be on the airline’s website. The airline should tell you where to send the form.

Sometimes, you may also have to fill out other government forms. For example, if you are traveling to another country, there are forms that need to be filled out by everyone traveling with an animal. Other than that, airlines can’t make you fill out extra forms.

You should also bring paper copies of the forms with you when you travel. You may have to show these forms at the gate.

Health, Behavior and Training Form

All people with service dogs need to fill out the Health, Behavior and Training Form. You will have to answer questions about your dog. This includes:

- The name of the service dog **user** and **handler**. These may be the same person.
 - The **user** is the disabled person.
 - The **handler** is the person who controls the animal. It may be the disabled person. It may also be a supporter.
- When your dog was vaccinated for rabies
- Whether your dog has fleas or ticks
- The name of your veterinarian
 - You do not need to have your veterinarian sign the form.
- The name of your service dog's trainer
 - If you trained your own dog, you can write your own name.
- A promise that the dog is well behaved in public and hasn't attacked another person or dog
- A promise to pay for repairs if your dog breaks something or makes a mess
 - You have to promise that you are telling the truth
- You may have to pay a fine if you lie on the form

Relief Attestation Form

People with service dogs need to fill out the **Relief Attestation Form** if the flight is more than 8 hours long. You have to sign a form saying that your dog will not make a mess on the plane.

- You can say that your dog can last the whole flight without pooping or peeing.
- Or you can say that you have found another way to keep your dog from making a mess - for example, by using a dog diaper
- You have to agree to pay for cleaning if your dog makes a mess.
- You have to promise that you are telling the truth
- You may have to pay a fine if you lie on the form

Help With Forms

If you don't understand how to fill out the form, airlines might have to help you fill them out.

Deadlines for the forms

If you make your flight reservation more than **48 hours before traveling (two full days)**, you have to give the airline these forms in advance. You will have to send the forms **48 hours (two full days)** before your flight.

- For example, if your flight is on 5:00 PM on Sunday, you have to send in the form by 5:00 PM on Friday.

If you miss this deadline, an airline may still have to let you on the flight. It has to let you on the flight if it can review your forms by making a “reasonable effort” and without delaying the flight.

Other Questions You May Need to Answer

At the gate, airline staff can ask about your service animal. They can ask:

- Whether the animal is a service animal for a disabled person
- What the animal is trained to do

Airline staff **cannot ask**:

- What disability you have
- For a doctor’s note
- For a special certification or license (other than the forms mentioned above)
- To see the dog do something it was trained to do

If airline staff see your dog behaving badly, they can keep you from boarding the plane. This includes barking, growling, jumping on people, running off leash, or making a mess on the floor.

Online Check-In

You have a right to use online check-in, even when you are traveling with a service dog.

Words to Know

Emotional Support Animal (ESA)

An Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is an animal that helps you handle stress or other feelings. ESAs are not trained to do anything to help you. Instead, the ESA helps you just by being there.

handler

The handler is the person who controls the animal. It may be the disabled person. It may also be a supporter.

Health, Behavior and Training Form

A form you must fill out to bring your service dog with you on an airplane. This form asks you basic questions about your dog. For example, you may be asked who trained your service dog and who your veterinarian is.

Relief Attestation Form

A form some people must fill out to bring a service dog on an airplane. You only have to fill out this form if your flight is longer than 8 hours. The form asks you to confirm that your dog will not make a mess on the plane.

service dog

A service dog is a dog that is trained to do something to help you. This could include:

- Guide dogs
- Seizure alert dogs
- Dogs who help people with mobility disabilities
- Service dogs who help Deaf people

user

The service dog user is the disabled person.