

# Service Animals: Fast Facts for HRSA Recipients

## Overview

- Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a service animal is defined as **any breed of dog** that is **specifically trained** to do work for a person with a disability.<sup>1</sup>
- A service animal's work must be **directly related** to the person's disability.
  - Examples of tasks include:
    - Guiding people who are blind.
    - Alerting people who are deaf.
    - Pulling a wheelchair.
    - Calming a person during an anxiety attack.
  - **Note:** Solely providing emotional support, companionship, or comfort are **not** tasks covered under the law.
- A service animal must be **under the control** of its owner either through:
  - Physical means, such as a leash or harness, or
  - Through voice commands or hand signals.
- Service animals do **not** need to be certified or trained through a professional program. Individuals are permitted to train their own animals; **however**, animals still in training are **not** considered service animals.

## Requirements and prohibitions

<b>Requirement</b>	A recipient must generally allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all public facilities where patients, visitors, and members of the public are allowed.
<b>Prohibitions</b>	A recipient may NOT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Separate people who use service animals from others.</li><li>• Treat people who use service animals worse than others.</li><li>• Charge additional fees related to the service animal.</li><li>• Ask about the nature or extent of an individual's disability.</li><li>• Require proof that the animal has been certified, trained or licensed as a service animal.</li><li>• Require the animal to wear an identifying vest.</li><li>• Exclude a service animal from a facility because:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Of allergies or fear; or</li><li>○ Of a perceived lack of need for the service animal.</li></ul></li></ul>

## How to determine if an animal is a service animal:

A recipient may ask two questions:

1. Is the animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

## Limiting access

A service animal may be excluded from a facility if:

- The animal's presence interferes with safety requirements of the facility (e.g., sterile areas in hospital);
- The animal is not housebroken;
- The animal does not obey the owner's commands; or
- The animal's presence or behavior poses a direct threat (e.g., animal snaps at staff).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The rules that apply to service dogs also apply to miniature horses. However, an organization can consider whether the facility can accommodate the horse based on its type, size, and weight.

<sup>2</sup> Under the law, a "direct threat" is defined as a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be reduced or eliminated by reasonably modifying a recipient's policies or practices.

## Resources

If you have questions or would like further information regarding this topic, please contact HRSA's Office of Civil Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion (OCRDI) at [HRSACivilRights@hrsa.gov](mailto:HRSACivilRights@hrsa.gov).

- **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):**
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance on Animals in Healthcare Facilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/background/animals.html>
  - File a Complaint with HHS Office for Civil Rights: <https://www.hhs.gov/ocr/complaints/index.html>
- **U.S. Department of Justice:**
  - Service Animals Guidance: [https://www.ada.gov/service\\_animals\\_2010.htm](https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm)
  - Frequently Asked Questions about Service Animals and the ADA: [https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service\\_animal\\_ga.html](https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_ga.html)
- **U.S. Department of Education:**
  - File a Complaint with Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html>
- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):**
  - For Housing Providers: Assessing a Person's Request to Have a Service Animal as a Reasonable Accommodation under the Fair Housing Act: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PA/documents/HUDAsstAnimalNC1-28-2020.pdf>
  - File a Complaint with HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity: [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/online-complaint](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/online-complaint)
- **ADA National Network:**
  - Service Animals Fact Sheet: <https://adata.org/factsheet/service-animals>
- **ADA Now:**
  - Service Animals in Healthcare Settings: <http://www.adanowonline.org/winter2018article9.html>