



Service, Therapy and Emotional Support Animals

Dogs and other animals that are used to provide support both physically and emotionally, can be divided into three categories. Each has its own guidelines and vary in the amount of training and certification requirements.

Service Animal

- A service animal is a dog (or can be a miniature horse) specifically trained to do certain major life tasks for a person. This may include tasks such as:
 - Seeing eyes for the blind
 - Hearing and alerting for the deaf
 - Seizure or blood sugar detection
 - Reminders to take meds
 - Opening doors, carrying things or providing assistance in mobility
- Service animals are rigorously trained and are certified and registered.
- Service animals work for their owners and live with them. They are trained specifically for their individual handler.
- Service animals are identifiable by their harness and vest.
- Working service animals are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. They are eligible for special protections and admittance into no-pet housing, entry into no-animal-allowed facilities, and access to flights on airlines.
- Service animals should not be interacted with by the public while they are working.

Therapy Animal

- A therapy animal can be any species of animal trained to provide comfort to people or groups of people at a location away from their home. Locations may include:
 - Hospitals
 - Schools
 - Nursing homes
 - Disaster areas
 - Hospice centers
- Therapy animals are trained and certified.
- Therapy animals are given entry to areas in connection with specific programs and they are accompanied by their owner or volunteer.
- Therapy animals may also be used to improve social, emotional or cognitive functioning in patients and as a gentle way for staff to connect.
- Federal law does not legally protect therapy animals.

- Occasionally facilities will have an in-house therapy animal.
- Therapy animals provide their work “offsite” so they do not receive any special protections or allowances to live in no-pet housing.

Emotional Support Animal

- An emotional support animal is a domesticated animal that is part of the owner’s psychological treatment plan and is prescribed by a licensed mental health professional. This may include aiding in the treatment of:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Phobias
 - PTSD
- Emotional support animals help a specific person but they do not require any special training.
- Emotional support animals are not considered Service Animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Emotional support animals serve to reduce the negative impact of an emotional or psychological disability and do not provide assistance with physical tasks such as alerting for seizures, or opening doors.
- Emotional support animals are legally protected under the Air Carrier Access Act and the Fair Housing Amendments Act. This allows for the leashed animal to fly in the cabin with the handler they help and the animal qualifies for no-pet housing. (Some airlines apply restrictions on the type of animals allowed)
- Emotional support animals are not given any provisions to enter businesses that do not allow animals.

Choosing any type of support animal should be a well thought out decision, and often will require moderate to extensive training after you acquire your animal. Seeking the help of a professional trainer may be necessary.

If, after trying these suggestions, you are still experiencing undesirable behaviors in your dog, SUBMIT QUESTIONS by clicking the link under Ask A Trainer on the Behavior and Training page of the Wayside Waifs website: www.waysidewaifs.org.

Written by the Wayside Waifs Canine Behavior Team

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