

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service animals are afforded certain rights and protections to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to public places and services.

Definition of a Service Animal:

- The ADA defines a service animal as a dog (or in some cases, a miniature horse) that has been individually trained to perform tasks or work that mitigate a person's disability.
- The animal's work or tasks must directly relate to the person's disability.

Service Animals vs. Emotional Support Animals (ESAs):

- Service animals are distinct from emotional support animals and pets. Service animals are trained to perform specific tasks, while emotional support animals provide comfort but are not trained for specific tasks.
- The ADA only provides protections for service animals, not ESAs or pets.

Access Rights:

- Individuals with disabilities who use service animals are generally allowed to bring their service animals into areas that are open to the public, including businesses, restaurants, hotels, stores, and public transportation.
- Service animals must be allowed to accompany their handlers to places where the public is allowed.

No Requirement for Documentation or Identification:

- Businesses and other entities are not allowed to ask for documentation or proof of a disability when someone is accompanied by a service animal.
- They are also not allowed to require special identification for the service animal.

Control and Behavior:

- Service animals must always be under the control of the handler.
- They should be well-behaved and not pose a threat to others.
- If a service animal is not under control or behaves aggressively, the business or entity may ask that the animal be removed.
- Handlers are responsible for ensuring their service animals are well-trained and behave appropriately in public settings.

Allergies and Fear:

- Individuals with allergies to animals or those who fear animals are not valid reasons for denying access to a person with a service animal.
- Businesses may need to make reasonable accommodations to address such situations, such as seating the person with allergies away from the service animal.

Cleanliness and Waste Removal:

- Handlers are responsible for ensuring that their service animals are clean and do not create a mess.
- If an accident occurs, the handler is expected to clean it up promptly.

Miniature Horses:

- In certain circumstances, miniature horses that are trained to perform specific tasks may also be considered service animals under the ADA.
- The same access rights apply to miniature horse handlers.