

Know Your Rights: Using Service Animals

What is a service animal?

Any breed of dog that is **specifically trained** to do work for a person with a disability can be a service animal.

- A service animal's work must be **directly related** to the person's disability. For example:
 - Guiding a person who is blind.
 - Pulling a person in a wheelchair.
 - Reminding a person to take medicine.
 - Calming a person during an anxiety attack.
- The animal must be **under the owner's control** through:
 - A leash or harness.
 - Voice commands or hand signals.
- A service animal does **not** need to be certified or professionally trained.
- **Individuals can train their own service animals**; however, animals that are still in training are not service animals.

Where can a service animal go?

Generally, service animals may accompany their owners anywhere that patients, visitors, and members of the public are normally allowed to go.

Where can a service animal **not** go?

A service animal may be denied entry into a facility if:

- The animal interferes with safety requirements (for example, sterile areas in a hospital).
- The animal is not housebroken.
- The service animal will not obey the owner's commands.
- The animal poses a direct threat to others (for example, if a dog snaps at people).

What questions can program staff ask about a service animal?

- Program staff may ask two questions about service animals:
 1. Is the animal required because of a disability?
 2. What work or task has the animal been trained to do?
- Program staff **may not** ask for details about a person's disability or proof that the dog is a service animal.

What are examples of discrimination against a person who uses a service animal?

- Being separated from others.
- Being treated worse than someone who does not use a service animal.
- Being charged fees related to a service animal.
- Being asked to provide proof that a dog has been certified.
- Requiring the service animal to wear a vest.

Who can I contact if I think I have been discriminated against?

For questions about your rights:	HRSA's Office of Civil Rights, Diversity, and Inclusion at HRSACivilRights@hrsa.gov .
File a complaint about healthcare:	Department of Health and Human Services' Office for Civil Rights at (800) 368-1019.
File a complaint about education:	Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights at (800) 421-3481.
File a complaint about housing:	Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at (800) 669-9777.