

# SERVICE ANIMAL OR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? [1]

## What is a service animal?

Under Title II and Title III of the ADA, a service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Read our [Service Animal Basics](#) [2] page to learn more.

## What is an emotional support animal?

Not all animals that individuals with a disability rely on meet the definition of a service animal for purposes of ADA. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an emotional support animal is any animal that provides emotional support alleviating one or more symptoms or effects of a person's disability. Emotional support animals provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. Emotional support animals are not limited to dogs.

## What about a comfort animal or therapy animal?

Both types of animals, typically dogs, work in situations where stress levels are high. Comfort animals work during active crises. They offer a calming distraction to those impacted in an active disaster or emergency. Therapy animals provide people with healing contact, typically in an institutional or clinical setting, to improve their physical, social, emotional, or cognitive functioning. While these types of animals receive extensive training and may interact with all sorts of people, including an individual with a disability, they are not trained to perform a specific task for an individual with a disability.

## What is the key difference?

Individuals with a disability may use and interact with working animals for a variety of reasons. But only dogs who have received specialized training to perform a specific task or tasks for an individual with a disability are considered service animals. This is the key difference between a service animal and all other types of working animals, including therapy, comfort animals, and emotional support animals.

## What if I have a doctor's note that says I need my emotional support animal at all times? Does that make it a service animal?

It does not matter if a person has a note from a doctor that states that the person has a disability and needs to have the animal for emotional support. A doctor's letter does not turn an animal into a service animal.

**What does the Job Accommodation Network say about emotional support animals?**

Read [Emotional Support Animals in the Workplace: A Practical Approach](#) [3] to find out.

## Can I take my emotional support animal to work?

Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation when requested by an individual with a disability. Title I of the ADA covers employment. Title I does not limit the type of animal that an individual with a disability can take to the workplace. With this in mind, allowing a service animal or an emotional support animal to accompany an individual with a disability to work may be considered an accommodation. Learn more about [reasonable accommodations in the workplace](#) (<http://adata.org/factsheet/reasonable-accommodations-workplace>) [4].

You can also learn more about taking your service animal or emotional support animal to work by checking out our [Taking a Service Animal to Work](#) [5] page.

## Where can I learn more information?

**Watch a webinar!** The Northeast ADA Center, part of the ADA National Network, has developed a webinar called [“Is That a Service Animal? What Rights Apply Where](#) ([http://northeastada.org/media/play/0\\_91gi1m9f](http://northeastada.org/media/play/0_91gi1m9f)) [6]”. The one-hour session discusses the definition of service animals under the ADA, ACAA, and FHA and the difference between service animals and emotional support animals.

**Take a look at an infographic!** The Northeast ADA Center developed two helpful infographics. [“Service Animals & Emotional Support Animals are Not the Same](#) [7]” provides quick information about the key difference. [“Service and Emotional Support Animals on Airplanes](#) [8]” provides information specifically about flying with Air Carrier Access Act. Both infographics are available on their Facebook page.

**Check out this video!** The Rocky Mountain ADA Center, part of the ADA National Network, created a short [video that defines comfort, emotional support animal, and service animals](#) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vh-TwOXRKRk&list=PL9ZKdHjRPF5877sVOXtGjWCY9KqoM9J-l&index=9>) [9].

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[Service Animal Resource Hub Main Page](#) [10]

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[1] <https://adata.org/service-animal-resource-hub/differences>

[2] <https://adata.org/service-animal-resource-hub/basics>

[3] <https://askjan.org/publications/consultants-corner/vol12iss04.cfm>

[4] <http://adata.org/factsheet/reasonable-accommodations-workplace>

[5] <https://adata.org/service-animal-resource-hub/work>

[6] [http://northeastada.org/media/play/0\\_91gi1m9f](http://northeastada.org/media/play/0_91gi1m9f)

[7] <https://www.facebook.com/394193790770343/photos/a.753833328139719/753833571473028/?type=3&theater>

[8] <https://www.facebook.com/394193790770343/photos/a.753833328139719/753833444806374/?type=3&theater>

[9] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vh-TwOXRKRk&list=PL9ZKdHjRPF5877sVOXtGjWCY9KqoM9J-l&index=9>

[10] <https://adata.org/service-animal-resource-hub>