

↑  Arrivals

GUIDANCE ON SERVICE DOGS

First Edition





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Introduction

Service dogs play an essential role in aiding persons with disabilities, and their use in air travel is a growing focus in the broader effort to enhance the accessibility of transportation. However, inconsistent service dog definitions, verification processes, and handling procedures have created challenges for both airlines and persons with disabilities. See Annex B for an indicative list of service dog regulations in selected aviation markets.

To address these issues, IATA launched a Service Dogs Task Force to review current practices, develop non-binding service dog guidance for airlines, and identify potential approaches and considerations.

This document is intended to assist airlines in better understanding considerations related to the acceptance of service dogs, while supporting the integrity of accessibility policies across the aviation industry. It is designed to be a dynamic document that may reflect ongoing changes in laws, regulations, and policies governing service dogs within specific jurisdictions.

Acknowledgement

This IATA Guidance on Service Dogs has been developed through the collaborative efforts of airlines, regulators, service dog training bodies, and disability rights organizations that participated in the development process. Each member has contributed their expertise and perspective with the aim that the guidance reflects a balanced, practical approach. Their collective input has been valuable in shaping this document.



Chapter 1 – Dog Classifications

1.1 Service Dog

A service dog (also referred to as an assistance dog) is a dog individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, where applicable, provided that such training has been completed by an organization recognized by a competent national authority or accredited by an international assistance dog organization, subject to applicable laws and regulations in the relevant jurisdiction.

Service dogs are trained to perform tasks that assist individuals with a wide range of disabilities, many of which may not immediately be visible. These specific tasks for which these dogs are trained may vary, but mitigate the effects of a given disability, thereby enhancing their handlers' safety and independence, and reducing reliance on assistance from others, including airline personnel.

Eligibility for airport and aircraft access with a service dog may depend on the nature of the disability and the dog's documented or otherwise verifiable, where required by applicable regulations, training to perform specific tasks needed for the person with disability traveling. Airlines may, where permitted by applicable laws and regulations, require documentation or other evidence demonstrating that the dog has been individually trained to perform work or tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. All other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are generally excluded for the purposes of this guidance.

The following list outlines common use cases of service dogs. Please note that the list is not exhaustive. Recognized use cases may vary depending on the jurisdiction and airlines may require documentation or other verification of its capabilities and training subject to applicable laws and regulations. Selected use cases include the following:

- Guidance for blind and visually impaired persons
- Assistance for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons
- Mobility support to assist persons who use wheelchairs or walking devices or who have balance issues
- Assistance in case of neurological disabilities (e.g., obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, and other conditions).
- Medical alert assistance for a medical issue (e.g., seizure, low blood sugar, presence of allergens, etc.)

Service dogs can vary in size and breed. The dog must be appropriately sized to effectively undertake the required tasks and fit in the space provided onboard the aircraft, subject to airline safety and operational requirements. Trained service dogs are also handler-focused, desensitized to distractions, and highly skilled at performing specific tasks reliably and behaving appropriately in public settings. They are not distracted from their duties at home or in public and remain attentive and responsive to their handlers during work.

A special case involves "service dogs in training." These dogs should have opportunities to gain experience, but may not be afforded the same access rights as fully trained and recognized service



dogs under applicable laws and regulations. Airlines may determine, based on their policies and applicable regulations, whether to permit the transportation of service dogs in training in the aircraft cabin.

1.2. Non-Service Dog

Emotional support dogs, comfort/therapy dogs, companionship dogs, facility dogs, and similar animals are generally not trained to perform disability-mitigating tasks and may not be trained to behave in an aircraft environment and may present safety, security, and health risks in certain circumstances for all passengers. For this reason, these animals may not receive the same rights and benefits as service dogs and may travel as pets in accordance with the requirements set out in the IATA Live Animals Regulations¹ subject to applicable national regulations and airline policies.

Chapter 2 – Service Dog Training

Airlines should seek to accommodate passengers with disabilities traveling with trained service dogs, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Acceptance procedures may include requesting documentation, where permitted by applicable laws and regulations, demonstrating the service dog's training and the tasks it is trained to perform.

2.1 Certificated Training

A service dog may be trained and certified by an organization accredited by internationally recognized bodies such as Assistance Dogs International (ADI) and the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF). These organizations maintain accreditation standards, which may include:

- **Health standards** such as up-to-date vaccinations, health checks, and ongoing veterinarian care.
- **Training standards** including the ability to perform specific tasks and to behave appropriately in public settings without causing disruption. For example, the standards include the ability to toilet on command in proper places, so dogs do not have “accidents” when travelling. These may also include requirements related to leash control, handler supervision, and the ability to remain settled for extended periods.
- **Behavior standards** that promote a high level of reliability and control. Trained and accredited service dogs are expected to behave in a controlled and non-aggressive manner and remain focused on their handler. Some specific assistance dogs will have been trained to bark to alert in the case of a medical emergency.

2.2 Owner Training

In some jurisdictions, service dog owners are allowed to self-train their service dogs. While there are some local organizations, such as the Assistance Dogs Assessment Association in the United Kingdom that offer independent assessments and support to owner-trained service dogs, there is currently no international body that accredits or validates these dogs. The acceptance of owner-trained dogs

¹ <https://www.iata.org/en/publications/manuals/live-animals-regulations/>



should be determined in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. In such cases, airlines may consider appropriate measures to assess the suitability of the dog, to the extent permissible under applicable law.

In some jurisdictions, regulations may limit the ability of airlines to require proof regarding the training or identification of owner-trained service dogs. Such regulations may also limit the type of documentation or inquiries that airlines can request, requiring carriers to determine appropriate approaches within those constraints to support safe and orderly transport.

Chapter 3 - Acceptance and Verification of Service Dogs

Airlines should seek to permit a service dog to accompany a passenger with a disability in the aircraft cabin unless:

- Appropriate documentation cannot be provided for the dog, subject to local laws or regulations;
- The dog poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
- The dog causes a significant disruption or exhibits disruptive behavior in the cabin or at the airport; or
- The dog's carriage would violate local laws or regulations.

The acceptance of service dogs without globally aligned government policies and regulations defining service dogs and confirming their suitability for travel often presents operational challenges for airlines seeking to support the safe transport of passengers with disabilities.

To ensure the safety of all passengers and crew, airlines may consider requesting an appropriate level of assurance, such as certification, where permitted by applicable laws and regulations. If the standards conflict with specific regulations, aircraft operators may need to assess whether carriage of a particular dog is appropriate for safety reasons.

Currently, there is no globally consistent regulatory framework specifying how airlines should verify service dogs. The lack of globally agreed-upon definitions may result in airlines applying broader definitions. For example, some airlines may accept dogs trained by recognized organizations such as Guide Dogs for the Blind, the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) and Assistance Dogs International (ADI) without additional verification. These challenges indicate the potential benefit of greater standardization in the acceptance and verification of service dogs in air travel.

Given the lack of standardization, airlines seek to determine that a service dog has been trained to assist a person with a disability or medical condition and is able to travel safely in the aircraft cabin. This may increase the risk of non-qualified animals being presented as service dogs, as documentation may not always be subject to consistent verification standards to accommodate passengers who want to travel with their pets.

Some airlines use third-party organizations, such as the Open Doors Organization, to support the verification of whether a dog qualifies as a service dog.

Chapter 4 – Safety

In many cases, accessibility regulations may limit the circumstances under which airlines can decline acceptance of service dogs for passengers with disabilities to safety-related reasons. As aircraft configurations and operations vary, each operator should conduct a safety risk assessment to identify any applicable safety related risks and determine appropriate mitigation measures, which may include non-acceptance in certain circumstances.

Safety risk assessments should include:

- Location and positioning of the service dog to avoid **obstruction of emergency equipment or creating a trip hazard** in normal operations;
- The impact a service dog might have on the handler, other passengers, or crew members during an emergency evacuation, including **obstructing egress, impeding crew access to equipment, or delaying or slowing evacuation** times;
- Location and positioning of the service dog in the cabin so as not to **obstruct emergency exits** at any time;
- The ability for the handler and service dog to **evacuate through different exit types** – including steps, slides, or off-wing escape paths;
- Increased **evacuation times** where multiple service dogs are permitted onboard, where specific attention from crew members may be required;
- The potential for **unexpected or reactive behavior** from the dog in response to the aircraft environment, noise, or actions of pets, passengers or crew members;
- **Securing of the service dog** during take-off, landing and turbulence, so as not to cause injury to the handler or others during collision or impact; and
- **Weight and size** of the service dog, and the ability for it to be safely accommodated onboard.

Airlines should consider service and comfort issues within their assessments for acceptance of service dogs. However, these may not, in themselves, constitute sufficient grounds for refusal, subject to applicable laws and regulations. Such issues might include allergies, phobias, or complaints from other passengers.

A service dog should be able to be safely accommodated within the foot space in front of the seated passenger, taking into account relevant safety considerations (e.g., size, weight, and training).

In accordance with any applicable local laws and regulations, airlines may consider additional safety measures to protect their ground and flight crews as well as other passengers onboard (e.g., leashing of service dogs and the use of muzzles, where appropriate).

4.1 Evacuation

Airlines should include procedures in their Operations Manual for the evacuation of passengers with service dogs that facilitate the evacuation of the dog alongside the passenger, while minimizing disruption to others.

Procedures should also provide for passengers traveling with service dogs to receive an individual safety briefing before departure which includes information on how and when to evacuate, as well as the need to follow crew instructions during an unforeseen emergency evacuation.



Chapter 5 – Booking

The airline website should include clear guidance on booking and accepting service dogs, including information on training standards. This includes communication channels for passengers to contact the airline with any questions, as well as support for passengers preparing for their flights with a trained and certified service dog.

Airlines should provide passengers with the conditions for acceptance on their websites. These may differ due to varying requirements across jurisdictions. Please refer to IATA One Click Away Guidance,² which ensures that information on special assistance for passengers with disabilities or reduced mobility is immediately accessible—within one click or rollover—from an airline's homepage.

The airline booking system should enable passengers to indicate that they are traveling with a service dog, which should trigger an explanation of necessary procedures, including documentation review and seating arrangements.

Airlines should also endeavor to offer direct links on their websites to relevant third-party websites that passengers can consult for additional service dog information. In some jurisdictions, airlines may be required to liaise with veterinary, customs, and border control agencies in the destination country to notify them of the arrival of a service dog.

These measures can help streamline the arrival process and ensure that necessary documentation and procedures are reviewed in advance. Airlines should have systems in place to confirm the service dog's acceptance and readiness for entry upon arrival, minimizing delays and supporting a smooth transition for both the passenger and their service animal.

Airlines may request that passengers submit documentation related to a service dog (e.g., the dog's breed, weight, and/or size, a pet passport or animal health certificate, health records, as well as valid evidence of the training their service dog has received (in paper or, where feasible, in digital format) in advance of travel, where permitted by applicable laws and regulations. Advance notice will allow the airline to conduct the necessary checks and make travel arrangements, and to include the service dog (SVAN) special service request (SSR) code in the reservation at the time of booking, which can help expedite approval.

In accordance with local accessibility laws and regulations, airlines may refuse transportation of a service dog where sufficient advance notice has not been provided.

Passengers should check the animal import regulations of the country of departure, the destination, and any country they are transiting through. In most countries, service dogs are required to meet certain health and identification requirements, such as vaccination, microchipping, and animal health certification.

² <https://www.iata.org/contentassets/7b3762815ac44a10b83ccf5560c1b308/one-click-away-best-practices.pdf>.



Chapter 6 – At the Airport

To support the needs of service dogs, some airports may provide designated animal relief areas both landside and airside. These areas should be, where feasible, clearly indicated with appropriate signage and easily accessible to passengers throughout their journey. In some jurisdictions, airport staff may be required to be specifically trained to accommodate passengers with disabilities, including those traveling with service dogs.

Even when service dogs meet the specified criteria, there are notable variations in the level of human assistance required or preferred for passengers with service dogs at the airport, both pre-flight and post-arrival. These differences are due to the disability and the tasks for which the dog is trained.

Airport and airline staff should seek to provide information and assistance to the passenger in locating an animal relief area for their service dog.

Chapter 7 – Check-In

Check-in at the ticket counter is recommended for any person with a service dog, as it will allow airline personnel to assess the service dog's behavior and review any required documentation. Airlines may impose check-in deadlines for safety and operational reasons subject to local laws and regulations.

Boarding passes should clearly indicate the presence of a service dog to help ensure that a person with a disability and their service dog are to not be separated. Security personnel should also be appropriately trained to adjust screening procedures where applicable.

Check-in staff may review, where permitted by applicable laws and regulations, documentation such as:

- Applicable government-required forms (e.g., the US DOT's Service Animal Transportation Form and the Service Animal Relief Attestation Form).
- Training certificates from a recognized training organization, or other proof of training and certification.
- The pet passport or animal health certificate of the service dog, including relevant identification and vaccination information.

Chapter 8 – Boarding

Passengers traveling with service dogs should, where feasible, be offered the option to preboard the aircraft.

If service dog document validation checks have not already been completed elsewhere, verification checks may be conducted at the gate before boarding.

The airline may perform a visual assessment prior to boarding to check for any behavioral or health concerns that could pose a safety risk on board the aircraft, and may consider additional safety measures (e.g., leashing, muzzling, etc.) if necessary.



If the airline has limits on the number of dogs carried on board, priority may be given to passengers accompanied by recognized service dogs, in accordance with applicable policies and regulations.

Chapter 9 – Onboard

The airline safety risk assessment (see Chapter 4) will determine the most appropriate accommodation and seating location for the service dog so as not to cause obstruction, trip hazard, or other safety risk. In many cases this will be the floor area in front of the seated handler, or for smaller dogs, on the handler's lap. Service dogs should generally not be permitted to sit or lie on the aircraft seat, subject to applicable policies and regulations.

If, due to their weight, size, or behavior, a service dog cannot be accommodated in its assigned space, an airline may determine that transportation is not appropriate on the basis of safety. In these cases, airlines should endeavor to offer a suitable alternative arrangement for the accommodation of the service dog.

Where feasible, bulkhead seats should be allocated on a priority basis unless the passenger has made a specific request for a different seat. Passengers with service dogs should not be seated in exit rows in accordance with applicable safety regulations.

Airlines are generally not expected to reseat other passengers to accommodate a service dog except as required for designated priority seats based on local laws and regulations.

Once onboard, service dogs should not be allowed in galleys, which are designated food preparation areas. Passengers are responsible for bringing their own food and water bowls for the dog.

The dog should be able to relieve itself in a sanitary manner that does not inconvenience other passengers or crew. Airlines may consider restricting the use of the onboard lavatories for service dogs due to hygiene and safety.

Service dogs should not eat from passenger-serving items such as bowls or plates. If the dog becomes ill or distressed during the flight, the handler is expected to manage the situation. Best practice includes carrying a muzzle and a diaper, as some countries may require these.

Chapter 10 – Transit

Airlines are generally not responsible for providing care, food, or supervision of the animal during transit, subject to applicable laws and regulations. However, airline staff are encouraged to:

- Identify the location of an animal relief area.
- Assist in escorting the customer to the animal relief area, including through security, if necessary.
- Contact the local vendor or Complaint Resolution Official (CRO) for support.

Airport signage and airport websites should, where feasible, provide indications on the location of the nearest relief area.



Chapter 11 – Disembarkation

The country of arrival may require that the passenger wait on the aircraft until an animal health officer completes the clearance procedure before proceeding to the appropriate departure area for their next flight.

Chapter 12 – Irregular Operations

Passengers with disabilities, including those traveling with a service dog, should be given priority assistance during irregular operations or flight disruptions. However, in the event of a disruption, the service dog's welfare remains the handler's responsibility.

Chapter 13 – Staff Training

All frontline airline staff, including reservation and call center staff, should **be trained on** the specific requirements for service dog acceptance in their respective countries. While each country may differ in travel requirements, all frontline airport staff should be familiar with the service dog behavioral indicators provided in Chapter 14 to ensure the safety of all passengers.

Staff should be trained on determining whether service dogs that pose a safety risk may need to be denied transport according to the airline's internal policies and procedures and when boarding may need to be denied due to insufficient time to obtain required documentation prior to departure. If staff decide to deny boarding, they should document the details of the denial and any mitigations considered to facilitate travel, as well as provide the passenger with the reasons for denial and any relevant regulatory requirements impacting that denial.

If the aircraft is delayed on the ground for long periods or in case of transit, cabin crew should be trained to liaise with ground staff to support the person with a disability in case the service dog needs to be taken for relief.

Chapter 14 – Behavioral Observations

14.1 Visual Indicators

Service dogs are trained in both overall behavioral standards and specific tasks. Accredited training ensures that dogs are trained to behave in the following manner:

- **Non-aggressive and non-intrusive:** Trained service dogs are not expected to voluntarily growl, whine, snarl, or chase in public. In general, service dogs are not expected to bark unless they do so as part of their training to alert to an issue with their partner.
- **Toilet-trained:** Trained service dogs are expected to toilet on command and not defecate in public.
- **Non-obtrusive:** Trained service dogs are expected to maintain a sitting or down position for long periods of time, be able to curl up in a small seat area, and are expected to remain focused on their partner.
- **Task-trained:** Trained service dogs should be able to follow specific task requests.



It is important to note that service dogs are still dogs, so at times there may be a small deviation from this behavior, but it should be correctable and short lived.

Signs of a poorly trained or non-qualified service dog:

- Growling, snarling
- Aggression, lunging, biting
- Obvious discomfort in public spaces, cowering
- Repeated toileting in public places
- Inability to sit still, remain in a confined and unobtrusive position for the flight
- Climbing onto seats or trays
- Wandering or roaming around off leash
- Pulling on leash, not following commands
- Jumping on people
- Begging or stealing food from others

14.2 Improper Dog Behaviors

Airline personnel should not attempt to test a dog's behavior. Their first primary reference for assessing authenticity should be on the documentation provided by the passenger. However, airline staff can ask what tasks the dog is trained to perform and can observe if the dog is exhibiting any of the above behaviors. Dogs may be denied boarding if they repeatedly lunge, bite, or display other extreme behavior that is not easily corrected.

Recommendation: A reporting system should be in place for unacceptable service dog behavior, allowing information sharing with the industry and training organizations. See, for example, US Complaint Resolution Official (CRO) reports or mandatory crew reports.

Chapter 15 – Misrepresentation of Service Dogs

Some passengers may seek to circumvent government regulations or airline policies by misrepresenting their pets as service dogs, often to avoid fees or gain cabin access for their pets. A common tactic may include purchasing non-official service dog vests, ID cards, or certificates online, even though no official registry exists for service animals. Others may claim their pet provides emotional support, reflecting confusion between emotional support dogs and trained service dogs. These pets often may lack the necessary training to behave appropriately in public settings, which may lead to disruptions on board.

Some passengers may also not declare their animal's true status during booking or check-in, or may rely on limited verification processes. Others rely on vague or misleading medical documentation or assert legal protections that may not align with applicable requirements under the law. Moreover, in some cases, pets may be presented to perform basic tasks to mimic trained service dog behavior.

Such misrepresentation may undermine the legitimacy of genuine service animals and can pose safety and health risks to crew and passengers. Airlines should remain vigilant, ensuring appropriate documentation and behavior standards are met while balancing sensitivity toward passengers with disabilities.



Chapter 16 – Digital Identity and Verification

The majority of service dogs are likely to carry some form of identification. This may be a digital ID (e.g., ADI/IGDF digital ID card), a physical card, and/or a clearly visible leash/harness/vest with the training organization's details.

Airline staff may ask the handler if the dog is trained to perform tasks that mitigate a disability, and what those tasks are. In the United States, the dog should have been identified via U.S. Department of Transportation's Service Animal Air Transportation Form.

While not a foolproof way of identifying a service dog, the majority of well-trained dogs are expected to be safe, well-mannered, even-tempered, and unobtrusive in public settings, and are not expected to demonstrate the undesirable behaviors described in Chapter 14. (See Chapter 14 for detailed guidelines on visual indicators and expected standards of behavior of trained service dogs).

16.1 Digital ID

Assistance Dogs International (ADI) and the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), which accredit service dog training organizations worldwide, have collaborated to develop and implement a convenient and easy-to-use service dog partnership ID card that is stored on a mobile device. The Digital ID incorporates a moving QR code that is designed to reduce the risk of unauthorized duplication. This is connected to information about the dog's accreditation and its applicable health records, in accordance with applicable data protection and privacy laws. Links to other relevant documentation may also be developed. Not all ADI/IGDF organizations currently use the Digital ID card, and some service dog partnerships may use a physical ID card.

Recently, ADI and the Open Doors Organization have explored the possibility of integrating the Digital ID concept into the Open Doors Organization process. This could allow airlines to accept the ADI and IGDF IDs but would also create a way for other organizations or owner-trained service dog partnerships to use third parties such as the Open Doors Organization as a clearing house. What is being developed may support greater standardization in validation processes across airlines and service dogs.

16.2 Privacy and Data Protection

Digital credentials are not intended to take the form of a publicly accessible registry listing of approved individuals and their service dogs, as this may not be consistent with privacy laws in many jurisdictions. The use of a properly configured security mechanism, such as a digital ID, can allow individuals to provide their information in a data privacy compliant manner. This information is accessed securely through the ID and is not stored on a permanent registry list, which can help protect privacy and personal data.



Annex A – Service Dog Risk Management Plan for Airline Staff

A service dog risk management plan can provide airlines with a structured approach to identifying and mitigating risks associated with service dogs in airports and onboard aircraft. It should be implemented in accordance with relevant laws, safety standards, and passenger experience considerations. The protocol can be employed by gate agents, flight attendants, customer service personnel, ground crew, and airline management teams from check-in to disembarkation.

Legal Basics

- Staff should be aware of all local laws and regulations and airline-specific policies for service dogs.
 - Service dogs are trained to do tasks that directly mitigate a person's disability.
 - Service dogs may be permitted to accompany their handler in public spaces and on public transportation, subject to applicable laws and regulations. Emotional support dogs and therapy dogs are not considered service dogs. Service dogs are trained to do tasks for a person who is disabled, including individuals who are blind, hearing impaired and physically disabled. They also help those with invisible disabilities such as diabetes, epilepsy, post-traumatic stress disorder, and psychiatric disabilities.
 - In certain countries, it is permitted for non-accredited programs, trainers, or owners themselves to train a service dog.

Check-In

Risk: A pet or emotional support animal is presented as a service dog potentially causing safety or behavior issues.

Mitigation:

- Check required paperwork.
- If allowed, ask appropriate questions politely. (In the US, staff may ask, as an example, two questions: "Is the dog required because of a disability?" and "What task does the dog perform?")
- Do not decide that the service dog is non-qualified based on the way its handler looks. Many individuals use service dogs to mitigate invisible disabilities.
- Make sure the dog is on a harness or leash.
- Do not decide that the dog is a service dog if it wears a vest and the person has an ID card. Observe the behavior of the dog.
- If the dog is exhibiting uncontrolled barking, lunging, growling, cowering, or relieving itself indoors, give the handler the opportunity to calm the dog. If the dog can be brought under control by the handler, allow them to proceed.



Aggressive or Destructive Behavior Prior to Boarding

Risk: The dog continues to bark, growl, lunge at people or other dogs, interrupt staff duties, and cannot be controlled by its handler.

Mitigation:

- Intervene early if problems occur. It may indicate that the dog is not a trained service dog, or it is a dog having a very bad day and may not be suitable for travel.
- If you determine it is not safe for the dog to fly, consult with your supervisor or follow airline denial-of-travel protocols.
- Document the incident.

Note: 59% of those with service dogs who participated in a 2020 ADI Survey stated that most of the problems they encountered with uncontrolled dogs were at the airport gate before boarding.

Security Checkpoint Issues

Risk: Security delays due to improper screening

Mitigation:

- Inform the service dog handler of any airline programs that aid with screening.
- Coordinate with security for smooth clearance.
- Avoid separating dog from handler unless necessary.

Health and Safety Hazards

Risk: Dog vomits or urinates or defecates inappropriately prior to boarding or while on the airplane.

Mitigation:

- Prior to boarding, direct the passenger and service dog to the nearest animal relief area.
- If the service dog accidentally relieves itself, the airport cleaning staff should be notified.
- If the service dog continues to urinate, defecate, or vomit, this may indicate that the dog is not fit to travel, and the handler should be advised to consider postponing travel until the dog is fit to travel.
- A trained service dog is expected to be able to refrain from relieving itself on a flight or be able to appropriately relieve itself onboard (e.g., utilize a puppy pad).
- If a service dog accidentally relieves itself while on the aircraft, the handler should be provided supplies from the onboard cleaning kit. Contaminated waste should be removed from the aircraft using biohazard procedures. Ground cleaning crew should be notified for deep sanitation after landing.

Trip Hazards, Injuries, or Allergic Reactions

Risk: Service dog causes trip hazards, injuries, or allergic reactions.

Mitigation:

- Ensure dog remains in the handler's control and on leash/harness.
- Seat handler and dog in a way that minimizes aisle obstruction.



- Make sure cabin crew can access emergency equipment without obstruction.
- If allergy concerns arise, reseat affected passengers rather than moving the handler and dog.

Passenger Relations

Risk: Conflict between service dog and other passengers due to fear, allergies, or cultural sensitivities.

Mitigation:

- Respond with empathy and professionalism to all parties.
- Offer alternative seating to the concerned passenger and not to the handler and dog.
- Reinforce to passengers that service dogs may be permitted in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Emergency Procedures

Risk: In-flight emergency with a service dog on board.

Mitigation:

- Brief handler prior to takeoff about safety procedures involving the service dog in an emergency.



Annex B – Gap Analysis of Service Animal Regulations in Select Aviation Markets

[Updated March 2026]

	United States	Canada	United Kingdom	European Union	Japan	Brazil
Service Animal Requirement	Airlines are only required to transport service animals.	Airlines are required to transport service dogs.	Airlines must accept recognized assistance dogs in the cabin, subject to national regulations.	Airlines must accept recognized assistance dogs in the cabin, subject to national regulations.	Airlines must accept assistance dogs for persons with physical disabilities as defined under applicable legislation.	Airlines must accept guide dogs.
Definition	Service animal: A dog, regardless of breed or type, that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a qualified individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Animal species other than dogs, emotional support animals, comfort animals, companionship animals, and service animals in training are not service animals.	Service dog: A dog that has been individually trained by an organization or person specializing in service dog training to perform a task to assist a person with a disability with a need related to their disability. Emotional support dog (ESD): No clear statutory or regulatory definition. CTA ruling indicates emotional support animals do not perform a task; rather, their presence provides comfort and emotional support to	Recognized assistance dog (from CAA guidance; no clear statutory or regulatory definition): One that has been trained to assist a disabled person either by carrying out tasks on behalf of the owner or performing functions that address the needs of a disabled person arising out of their disability. This does not include dogs that solely provide emotional support. Likely to include the following types (but not exhaustive):	Recognized assistance dog (from ECAC guidance): A dog specifically trained to perform tasks allowing to increase the independence of persons with disabilities, recognized in accordance with applicable national rules, where such rules exist. (from the interpretative guidelines to Regulation (EC) No. 1107/2006): A dog that (1) has been selected and trained to meet the individual needs of a person with disability and (2) uses the abilities	Assistance dogs for persons with physical disabilities: Refers to guide dogs, mobility service dogs, and hearing dogs certified in accordance with the Act on Assistance Dogs for Persons with Physical Disabilities. All other dogs are categorized as pets.	Guide dog: a neutered, non-aggressive animal of any sex, of suitable size, trained for the sole purpose of guiding visually impaired people.

		persons with mental health-related disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • autism assistance dogs; • guide dogs; • hearing dogs; • medical alert assistance dogs; • physical disability assistance dogs; • post-traumatic stress disorder assistance dogs; • psychiatric assistance dogs; • allergy alert dogs; and • dementia assistance dogs. 	and the skills they have learned when assisting their owners in carrying out their daily activities. Assistance dog (from CEN, the European Committee for Standardization): a dog specifically trained to perform tasks to increase independence and to mitigate limitations of a person with a disability.		
Breed/Species	Airlines are required to recognize dogs as service animals and accept them for transport on flights to, within and from the United States, regardless of breed. Airlines, though not required, are free to transport other species of		In the UK, it is against the law to own a Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino, and Fila Brasileiro. XL Bully dogs are banned in England and Wales.			



	animals if they choose to do so.		Whether the dog is a banned type depends on what it looks like, rather than its breed or name. A passenger cannot bring a banned breed of dog into Great Britain unless it already has a valid Certificate of Exemption.			
Limitations on size of animal?	Too large or heavy to be accommodated in the cabin (i.e., not able to fit on the passenger's lap or foot space on the aircraft).					
Limit on number of animals in cabin	Airlines are not required to accept more than two service animals for a single passenger with a disability.	No limit specified.	No limit specified.	No limit specified.	No limit specified.	No limit specified.
Does animal have to be trained?	Yes	Service dog – Yes; Emotional support dog – No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is the dog required to perform a specific task?	Yes	Service dog – Yes; Emotional support dog - No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
How do airlines determine whether an animal is a service animal?	Airlines can determine whether an animal is a service animal or pet by:					

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking an individual with a disability if the animal is required to accompany the passenger because of a disability and what work or task the animal has been trained to perform; • Looking for physical indicators such as the presence of a harness or vests; • Looking to see if the animal is harnessed, leashed, or otherwise tethered; and • Observing the behavior of the animal. 					
<p>What type(s) of training are accepted? (i.e., self-training, training from accredited organization)</p>	<p>Self-training and third-party training are allowed.</p>		<p>Minimum training standards are deemed to be met if the assistance dog has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Been trained by an accredited 	<p>Training provided by an accredited member organization of Assistance Dogs International (ADI) or the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF).</p>	<p>Guide dogs must be trained by a member of the International Guide Dog Federation.</p> <p>Mobility service dogs must be trained by an</p>	<p>Training must be carried out in institutions accredited by the National Institute of Metrology, Standardization and</p>

			<p>member organization of Assistance Dogs International (ADI) or the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received accreditation from the Assistance Dogs Assessment Association (ADAA); or • Trained to the same or higher standard as those organisations if evidence of training can be provided. This might include dogs trained by organizations in some countries which legislate accreditation methods and/or assistance dogs trained by government authorized organizations). 	<p>Training certified by a government body.</p> <p>Owner training (in some countries).</p> <p>Training accredited by the Assistance Dogs Assessment Association (ADAA).</p>	<p>accredited member of Assistance Dogs International.</p> <p>Hearing dogs must be trained by an accredited member of Assistance Dogs International.</p> <p>Privately trained service dogs are not accepted as assistance dogs.</p>	<p>Industrial Quality (INMETRO).</p> <p>The user of a guide dog trained by a foreign institution must carry the guide dog's identification card issued by the training center or autonomous foreign instructor or a certified copy of the diploma of completion of the training in the language in which it was issued, accompanied by a simple translation of the document into Portuguese.</p>
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<p>Is advance notification allowed/required?</p>	<p>Airlines may require individuals traveling with a service animal to provide the U.S. DOT service animal form(s) up to 48 hours in advance of the date of travel if the passenger’s reservation was made prior to that time.</p>			<p>Airlines may require the passenger to provide advance notification that they will be traveling with a recognized assistance dog.</p>		
<p>Check-in requirements</p>	<p>Airlines are prohibited from requiring passengers with a disability who are traveling with a service animal to physically check-in at the airport instead of using the online check in process.</p>					
<p>Government requirements (i.e., attestation forms, vaccinations, microchip, training certification)</p>	<p>Airlines may require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) a U.S. DOT form attesting to the animal’s health, behavior, and training; and (2) a U.S. DOT form attesting that the animal can either not relieve itself or can relieve itself in a sanitary manner, if the animal will be on a flight that is 8 or more hours. 	<p>At booking, an airline may require the passenger to provide a declaration attesting that the service dog has been individually trained by an organization or person specializing in service dog training to perform a task to assist the person with a disability with a need related to their disability.</p> <p>Before departure, an airline may require a passenger</p>	<p>Service dogs must meet all pet requirements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel on an approved route. Approved routes are not required if traveling within the UK or from Ireland. • Be microchipped before getting a rabies vaccination; 	<p>Recognized assistance dogs must meet all pet requirements, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be micro-chipped (in line with the technical requirements of Annex II of the EU Regulation on the movement of pets) or has a clearly readable tattoo if 	<p>Passengers must apply for and receive a “Temporary Certificate for Foreign Assistance Dog Users” from a certified Japanese assistance dog training organization.</p> <p>All dogs, including assistance dogs, must meet the importation requirements of the Rabies Prevention Law, including implanting the dog with a microchip, getting the dog</p>	<p>Passenger must present documentation identifying the dog and attesting to its training.</p> <p>Guide dogs undergoing training must be accompanied by a trainer, instructor, or qualified person.</p> <p>Passengers must present documents referring to the health of the guide dog issued by a veterinarian</p>



	<p>Airlines are not permitted to require other documentation from service animal users except to comply with requirements on transport of animals by a Federal agency, a U.S. territory, or a foreign jurisdiction.</p>	<p>to provide an identification card or other document that is issued by an organization or person specializing in service dog training that identifies the person with a disability and attests that the service dog has been individually trained by the organization or person to perform a task to assist the person with a disability with a need related to their disability. The passenger can satisfy this requirement if they have previously provided the card or document and the airline has retained an electronic copy of it.</p> <p>For ESDs, an airline may require at least 96 hours in advance of travel:</p> <p>(1) Proof from a treating physician or medical health professional that the passenger has a mental health disability and requires an ESD as an accommodation for travel;</p> <p>(2) Proof from a veterinarian that the ESD's</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be vaccinated against rabies at least 21 days before entering Great Britain; • Have a required travel document (i.e., a pet passport issued in an EU country or certain other countries, an Animal Health Certificate issued in Great Britain in the last 4 months, a Great Britain pet health certificate, or a pet passport issued in Great Britain before 1 January 2021); and • Be treated no less than 24 hours before (and no more than 5 days before) before arriving in Great Britain. 	<p>applied before 3 July 2011;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be vaccinated against rabies; • Undergo a rabies antibody titration test, when travelling from a non-EU country; • Be treated against the tapeworm <i>Echinococcus multilocularis</i>, where the destination area is free from this tapeworm (Finland, Ireland, Malta, Norway and Northern Ireland); and • Have a valid European pet passport, when travelling from an EU country or Northern Ireland to another EU country or Northern Ireland or an EU animal health certificate, 	<p>vaccinated against and tested for rabies, submitting an import notification form, and having the dog inspected upon arrival. If the dog meets the import requirements upon arrival, the quarantine period is within 12 hours. Dogs that do not meet the requirements will be subject to quarantine at a detention facility of the Animal Quarantine Service for a period up to 180 days.</p> <p>Assistance dogs are required to wear a sign at all times indicating the dog's name, breed country of export, date of entry and departure</p>	<p>licensed to work in Brazilian territory and accredited by the regulatory body of their profession.</p> <p>Airlines must keep a record of each time a passenger travels with a guide dog and retain that record for two years.</p>
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		<p>vaccinations are up to date; and</p> <p>(3) Veterinary certification, dated within one week of the initial departure date, attesting that the ESD is healthy enough to travel, including that it is free from contagious diseases, ticks and fleas, and current on its vaccinations.</p> <p>For requests made less than 96 hours in advance, the airline must make every reasonable effort to transport the person with a disability and their ESD.</p> <p>Passenger must demonstrate that their ESD meets all travel, entry or exit requirements of the geographical location they travel to or from, which includes providing all required documentation, as applicable.</p>		<p>when travelling from a non-EU country.</p>		
<p>Under what circumstances can a trained service animal be denied transport or be</p>	<p>Airlines are permitted to deny transport to a service dog if it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violates safety requirements - 	<p>Airlines are permitted to deny transport to an ESD if it:</p>	<p>An airline may ask for confirmation that the dog has been trained to a standard that allows it to travel safely by air.</p>	<p>Airlines may deny boarding to a recognized assistance dog if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the passenger does not provide 	<p>An airline may deny transport of the service dog in the event of unavoidable circumstances that may</p>	



<p>required to travel as a pet?</p>	<p>e.g., too large or heavy to be accommodated in the cabin;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others; • Causes a significant disruption in the cabin or at airport gate areas; or • Violates health requirements - e.g., prohibited from entering a U.S. territory or foreign country. <p>Airlines may also deny transport to a service dog if the airline requires completed DOT service animal forms, and the service animal user does not provide the airline these forms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks required documentation; • Does not travel in a carrier-approved pet carrier; • Does not meet all travel, entry, or exit requirements of the geographical location it is traveling to or from; or • Poses a threat to the health or safety of others by exhibiting aggressive or otherwise undesirable and uncontrolled behaviour, including barking, growling or whining. 		<p>the required advance notification or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the national rules of the destination country prohibit entry. 	<p>lead to substantial harm to facilities.</p>	
<p>Onboard requirements for service animals</p>	<p>Airlines may require that service animals be harnessed, leashed, or tethered at all times while in areas of the airport they</p>	<p>Airlines may require service animals to be harnessed, leashed, or tethered.</p>	<p>The dog should sit in the floor space of the passenger. An airline may charge for a second seat if there is not enough floor</p>			<p>Guide dogs must sit on the floor on the aircraft cabin, close to the passenger and under their control and wear a harness. They</p>



	<p>own, lease or control, or on onboard the aircraft.</p> <p>Animals under four months of age may not travel as a service animal.</p> <p>Service animal must be able to fit at the passenger's feet without encroaching on the space of adjacent passengers, in the space under the seat in front of the passenger, or on the passenger's lap, if it can be done so safely.</p> <p>Service animals cannot be seated in an exit row, protrude into or block aisles, occupy a seat, or eat from a tray table.</p> <p>An airline is not required to upgrade a passenger to a different class of service to accommodate their service animal.</p> <p>Airlines cannot refuse to allow a service animal onboard because it makes other passengers or flight crew uncomfortable.</p>	<p>If, because of the size of the service dog, the passenger seat of the person with a disability does not provide sufficient floor space for the service dog to lie down at the person's feet in a manner that ensures the safety and well-being of the dog and the person, the carrier must provide to the person any passenger seat adjacent to their passenger seat that is needed to provide sufficient floor space for the service dog. If the flight is a domestic flight, the additional seat must be provided free of charge.</p> <p>An ESD must travel in an appropriate pet carrier that must fit under the seat in front of the passenger for the duration of the trip. The pet carrier must meet the airline's conditions and restrictions for carriage of pet carriers in the cabin.</p>	<p>space for the dog to lie down.</p> <p>A safety harness should be taken on the plane to enable your dog to be secured during take-off and landing.</p>			<p>may not obstruct, either totally or partially, the aisle of the cabin.</p>
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	<p>Before refusing to transport a large service animal that cannot be accommodated on the passenger's lap or in the passenger's foot space without encroaching into another passenger's space, airlines must offer the passenger the opportunity to move with the animal to another seat location within the same class of service, if available on the aircraft, where the animal can be accommodated.</p> <p>If there are no alternatives available to enable a passenger to travel with their service animal in the cabin, an airline must offer the passenger the opportunity to transport the service animal in the cargo hold free of charge or travel on a later flight to the extent there is space available on a later flight and the transport is consistent with the safety requirements set by the FAA or a foreign carrier's government.</p>					
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Airline personnel training	Airlines are required to train all employees who interact with the public or who participate in making decisions or in developing policies or procedures in relation to disability regulations on the role and needs of a service dog.					
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