

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regulates the transportation of service animals and emotional support animals under the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA). In July 2019 they released new guidance that governs ESA and Service Dog rules as it relates to flying.

- An airline may refuse transport to an individual animal regardless of species if the airline determines the animal is too large or too heavy, poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, or would cause a significant disruption in cabin service.
- **Advanced Notice:** Airlines are prohibited from requiring advance notice for passengers traveling with service animals, but can require it for other than ESAs.
- **Proof that an Animal is a Service Animal:** If a passenger's status as an individual with a disability is unclear (for example, if the disability is not clearly visible), then the airline personnel may ask questions about the passenger's need for a service animal. For example, airlines may ask, "how does your animal assist you with your disability?" A credible response to this question would establish both that the passenger is an individual with a disability and that the animal is a service animal."
- **Check-in Requirements:** An airline can require an ESA to check in one hour before the check-in time for the general public.
- **Documentation Requests for ESAs** - An airline is allowed to ask for additional documentation for an ESA's such as vaccination, training, or behavior info along with having the owner present such documentation up to 48 hours before his or her flight.
- **Containing ESAs and Service Dogs in the Plane Cabin:** Carriers are allowed to impose reasonable restrictions on the movement of ESAs and Service Dogs in the cabin of a plane so long as the reason for the restriction is concern for the safety of other passengers.

- **Animal Types-** Airlines are not required to accommodate unusual service animals and ESAs, such as snakes, reptiles, ferrets, rodents, and spiders. Airlines are allowed to deny transport to an animal if, among other things, it poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. However, specific dog breeds are not allowed to be discriminated against. For example, airlines can't say pitbulls aren't allowed on the flight.
- **Age Restrictions-** Airlines can say the ESA's and Service Dogs younger than 4 months are not allowed to fly in the cabin of the plane since animals of this age are too young to be properly trained.
- **Number Restrictions- Passengers are allowed one ESA and up to three Service Dogs on a flight.**
- **Weight Restrictions-** An animal may be excluded from the cabin if it is too large or too heavy to be accommodated in the specific aircraft at issue on a case by case basis.
- **Flight-Length Restrictions-** Airlines may not restrict service animals on flights scheduled to last 8 hours or more, and would be subject to potential enforcement action if they do so. On flights scheduled to last 8 hours or more, airlines may ask for 48 hours' advance notice, early check-in, and documentation that the animal will not need to relieve itself on the flight or that it can do so in a way that does not create a health or sanitation issue on the flight
- **Letter or Form from a Mental Health Professional for an ESA-** An airline may ask or encourage a passenger to request that the licensed mental health professional treating the passenger fills out the airline's own proprietary medical form, airlines may not reject a medical form or letter that meets the criteria found required by law.