



Disaster Shelters must permit a person with a disability to be accompanied by their service animal, even if the shelter has a “No Pets” policy.

In the United States, approximately 500,000 service dogs are helping people every day.

<https://share.america.gov/service-dogs-save-lives>

Accordingly, entities that have a “no pets” policy generally must modify the policy to allow service animals into their facilities.

*Department of Justice
Frequently Asked Questions about
Service Animals and the ADA*

Key Facts About Service Animals for Disaster Shelter Workers

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a federal law, disaster shelters cannot discriminate against people with disabilities. To adequately serve people with disabilities in emergency situations, policies may need to be modified. Shelters must permit a person with a disability to be accompanied by their service animal, even if the shelter has a “No Pets” policy.

Service animals:

- Are dogs (with the single possible exception of a miniature horse)
- Are individually trained to perform a specific task for a person with a disability
- Are allowed in all the areas that the public is generally permitted to go
- Are not required to have special licenses or certifications
- Do not have to have a vest or tags, but may have them
- Must not be separated from its owner/handler
- Must behave appropriately in the public
- Must always be under the control of their handler
- Are the responsibility of the handler to groom, feed, and toilet
- Are not emotional support, comfort, or therapy animals, but can be psychiatric service animals

If you are in doubt about a service animal, you can only ask two questions.

1. Do you need this animal because of a disability?
2. What work or task has it been trained to perform?

You cannot ask for a demonstration of a task or about the person’s disability; remember many disabilities cannot be seen.

If an animal is not a service animal or if a service animal is not under the control of its handler, you can ask to have the animal removed and provide the handler with a list of pet sheltering resources, such as local boarding facilities at veterinary clinics or private kennels, county or state pet shelters, or Non-Governmental Organization operated facilities. The handler must not be denied access and can remain.