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Is a service dog right for me (or someone I know)?

In addition to the particular disability-mitigating work or tasks a psychiatric service dog can do to help you, having a psychiatric service dog can help you understand your mental illness, stand up for yourself in public, and facilitate interpersonal interactions by deflecting social pressure.

These animals are the reason why our slogan is

Dogs Saving Lives

But a service dog is complementary medicine that's *de finitely not for everyone*:

- You must **meet the dog's needs** (exercise, mental stimulation, vet bills, training); love is not enough!
- A service dog is a **long-term commitment** that “outs” you as having a disability; get used to questions and access challenges!
- You must **devote yourself to dog training**, even if you get a dog from a program (professionally assisted owner-training is recommended for psychiatric service dogs)

Psychiatric Service Dogs Partners' purpose is to promote the mental health of people using service dogs for psychiatric disabilities by educating, advocating, providing expertise, facilitating peer support, and promoting responsible service dog training and handling.



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What are the rights and responsibilities of service dog users?

Rights

Generally, a disabled person using a service dog must be allowed to be accompanied by that service dog anywhere the public is allowed—anywhere it is a reasonable accommodation. This **public access** includes restaurants, movie theaters, grocery stores, and hospitals. The dog does not need special equipment, and the handler cannot be required to show paperwork; certification is optional.

Service dogs are also allowed in no-pet hotel rooms and **housing**. While service dogs are allowed on **flights**, airlines can require special paperwork from those using service dogs exclusively for psychiatric disabilities (changes are slowly underway in 2016). Paperwork can be required of all service dog users in housing and **employment** situations to establish the person's need for a reasonable accommodation.

Businesses cannot charge a service dog user more, though handlers are responsible for any damages.

Responsibilities

Service dog handlers foremost owe others **public safety**; service dogs must be non-aggressive, clean and healthy, and extensively trained for stable public access. It should never be unclear whether the dog is well-behaved, but if it is unclear or if the person's disability is not obvious, **businesses can ask** whether the dog is trained to help with a disability, and what work or tasks the dog is trained to do. Regardless of whether the dog is a service dog, businesses can (probably should) require that the dog be removed if it is **not housebroken or causes a disruption** the handler does not effectively control.