

Texas Workforce Solutions –  
Vocational Rehabilitation Services

# Rights and Responsibilities of People Using Service Animals



*Texas Workforce Solutions comprises the Texas Workforce Commission, 28 local workforce development boards and our service-providing partners. Together we provide workforce education, training and support services, including vocational rehabilitation assistance for the people of Texas.*

## **Service Animal Definition**

Service animals are typically dogs specially trained or equipped to help individuals with disabilities. There is no government licensing, registration, or certification of service animals. Registering service animals is not required by law.

Service animals are not pets and should not be treated as such. An animal that provides only comfort or emotional support is not considered a service animal.

## **Your Rights**

Texas law and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantee the right of a person who is blind or has other disabilities — including post-traumatic stress disorder — to be accompanied by a trained service animal or a service animal in training in all public places.

## **Public Places and Transportation**

You have the right to enter public places and use public transportation with your trained service animal. The same access must be provided to service animals in training that are accompanied by an approved trainer per state law. However, the law does not define approved trainer.

Public places include:

- Hotels, motels, or other places of lodging.
- College dormitories and educational facilities.
- Businesses.
- Restaurants or other places where food is offered for sale.
- Medical clinics, examining rooms, and in hospital cafeterias and patient rooms.

***State and federal laws guarantee the right of people who have disabilities to be accompanied by a trained service animal in all public places with no additional cost for the service animal.***

## **Housing**

Under the Fair Housing Act, you have the right to full and equal access to housing accommodations. Reminder, service animals are not pets. As the owner of a service animal, you are exempt from pet deposits and policies against owning pets; service animals are not pets. An exception to this rule is made for single-family residences where only one room is rented, leased, or furnished.

## **Employment**

Under Title I of the ADA, a service animal may be a reasonable accommodation if an employer has more than 15 employees. If applicable, you have the right to use a service animal at your job. Your employer may request professional written verification when it is not obvious that the animal is a service animal.

## **Questions About Your Service Animal**

You have the right not to be asked about your service animal's qualifications or certifications when entering a public place. Representatives of the place may not ask you to show documentation (for example, medical and training records). Representatives, however, may ask you if the service animal is required because of your disability and what work or task the animal has been trained to perform.

## **Your Responsibilities**

You are responsible for damages caused by your service animal. You must keep the animal properly harnessed, leashed, and controlled. If your disability does not permit the use of a harness, leash, or tether, the animal must still be under your control.

A handler may be asked to remove the service animal if control cannot be maintained. If this happens, the establishment must still allow you to obtain goods or services without the service animal, including the use of other reasonable accommodations.

You also must provide proper care for your service animal. Service animals that are abused or neglected are subject to seizure.

## **Discrimination, Fraudulent Use, and Penalties**

It is illegal for you to discriminate against an individual who has a disability. It is also illegal for you to misrepresent the use of an animal as a service animal; this includes falsely using a harness or leash that identifies a specially trained service animal.

Each illegal act is a misdemeanor and applies to you, a firm, an association, a corporation, a public or private organization, and their agent. Discrimination is punishable by a fine of not more than \$300 and 30 hours of community service. Misrepresentation is punishable by a fine of not more than \$1,000 and 30 hours of community service.

## **Submit a Complaint**

- To report service animal misrepresentations, contact your local law enforcement agency.
- To report service animal abuse or neglect, contact your local animal control unit.
- To report housing and employment discrimination, call the TWC Civil Rights Division at 512-463-2642.
- To report public transportation discrimination, contact the transportation provider or the U.S. Department of Transportation Civil Rights Office at 202-366-4648.

For more information about the rights and responsibilities of people using service animals, visit: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/programs/vocational-rehabilitation/service-animals>

## **Your Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services Office**

To locate your Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services office, visit: [www.twc.texas.gov/find-locations](http://www.twc.texas.gov/find-locations)



**TEXAS**  
**WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS**

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

**TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS -  
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES**

**101 East 15th Street  
Austin, Texas 78778-0001  
512-936-6400**

**Equal Opportunity Employer/Program**

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

The Texas Workforce Commission accepts calls made through any relay service provider.

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For purposes of the Supported Employment program, the Vocational Rehabilitation agency receives 94.7 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For the 2023 federal fiscal year, the total amount of grant funds awarded are \$1,482,250. The remaining 5.3 percent (\$82,347) are funded by Texas State Appropriations. Revised May 2023.

For purposes of the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind program, the Vocational Rehabilitation agency receives 90 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For the 2022 federal fiscal year, the total amount of grant funds awarded are \$2,202,209. The remaining 10% (\$244,690) are funded by Texas State Appropriations. Revised May 2023.