



Media Contact: Jeanine Konopelski
Email: jkonopelski@cci.org Phone: 707-577-1759

Date: December 2, 2020
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Training Programs Approve New DOT Rules for Flying With Service Dogs

NEW YORK December 2, 2020 – The federal government has updated the rules for flying with service animals – and organizations that train those dogs approve of the updates.

“For years, untrained dogs and other animals have posed a threat to disabled passengers flying with legitimately trained service dogs,” says Sheila O’Brien, chair of Assistance Dogs International, North America (ADI NA). “In a survey of our graduates, 25% reported attacks by untrained dogs on flights.”



ADI NA includes 99 service dog training programs, which have trained nearly 17,000 guide and service dogs currently working in North America.

The new rules update the Air Carrier Access Act, which governs accessibility for air travel. The biggest change, and that most applauded by the service dog training industry, is the new definition of “service animal.” It will now align the Americans With Disabilities Act’s definition. Service animals will now be defined only as dogs, no longer including other types of animals. The dogs must be trained to perform actual tasks that mitigate their human partner’s disability. Emotional support animals will no longer be considered service animals. This means that they will have to travel as pets, in crates or other carriers.

“People with disabilities depend on their service dogs to live independently” says Sheri Soltes, vice chair of ADI NA and chair of the ADI NA Legislative and Advocacy Committee. “With the new DOT rules, airline passengers with disabilities who use trained service dogs, can travel safely without the risk of themselves or their dogs being attacked by out of control animals.”

“Those animals also posed a risk to other passengers, airline staff and the public,” she adds.

The new rules also classify psychiatric service dogs as service animals. “Psychiatric service dogs wake up their partners from nightmares, turn lights on in a dark room so their person feels safe entering it and perform other customized tasks to help them with psychiatric disabilities such as post-traumatic stress disorder,” explains O’Brien. “Their high level of training, including behavior in public, justifies classifying them as service animals. All of our ADI NA member organizations and thousands of graduates welcome the DOT’s new rules.”

###

About Assistance Dogs International, North America

Founded in 1986, Assistance Dogs International, www.assistancedogsinternational.org, is a worldwide coalition of non-profit organizations that train and place assistance dogs with individuals with disabilities to improve their quality of life. Presently there are 16,868 highly trained ADI certified service dog teams, actively working in North America.

Contacts

Sheila O’Brien
Chair, Assistance Dogs International, North America
sheila@vetdogs.org
631-672-5895 (m)

Sheri Soltés
Vice Chair, Assistance Dogs International, North America
Chair, ADI NA Legislative and Advocacy Committee
sheri@servicedogs.org
512-680-4009 (m)