



What is the difference between Service Dogs, Therapy Dogs, Comfort Dogs

A Therapy Dog Is Not a Service Dog. Many people use the therapy dog, service dog, comfort dog titles interchangeably. There are important differences between the two jobs.

A **service dog** helps individuals perform tasks they cannot do for themselves because of a disability. The Americans with Disabilities Act governs the use of service dogs in public places. A service dog will often wear a vest with the wording “please do not pet,” indicating that the dog is working. Persons with disabilities can take their service dogs into public places normally prohibited to dogs, such as on public transportation, and in public buildings, stores, and restaurants.

Therapy dogs do not have federally granted legal access to the types of public areas afforded to service dogs. It is important to check these regulations on a State-by-State basis. A therapy dog is present to be petted and provide comfort and affection to individuals in a variety of places that request visits. A therapy dog and his handler visit facilities such as hospitals, retirement homes, care facilities, schools and libraries. They might also visit people who have experienced a trauma in a disaster area. Therapy dogs may serve to help relieve stress for passengers at airports and for college students taking finals at universities. These dogs will often wear a vest or bandanna inscribed with the name of a therapy dog organization.

Therapy Dog Teams may be used for intervention and treatment planning with professional health care professionals. This requires a contract, documentation and a commitment of time. If insurance is involved, prior approval, like other therapeutic counseling (sand, music, cognitive, behavioral, narrative, dance) is required. These visits usually are fee for service. Insurance / liability is the direct responsibility of the providers and organization.

Comfort and/or Emotional Therapy Dogs might be trained to provide affection, comfort or help relieve stress to individuals in a variety of environments such as hospitals, care facilities, schools, hospices, disaster areas, and to people with challenges such as anxiety or autism.

Reading Dog Teams offer children an opportunity in schools and libraries to spend 15 – 30 minutes reading to dogs. This helps relieve stress and provide incentive/motivation for educational enrichment.

Read, comfort and emotional support animals require a registration and/or certification from a national organization.

After **Basic Manners and Socialization Skills Training**, all dogs continue training, focusing on the specific needs required. Below, are helpful sites to clarify the differences. There are many.

Petpartners.org

TDI-Dogs.org

NEADS.org

Usservicedogs.org

Therapyanimals.org

ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

akc.org