


ADA Service Dog Laws & Information – Epic Guide & FAQ [2022]

 theservicedogs.com/ada-service-dog-laws/


June 22, 2022

Welcome to This Comprehensive Guide To Service Dog ADA Laws Updated For 2022

Hello and welcome to the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)  **Service Dog Laws 2022** comprehensive guide and summary. Many people who live with disabilities use a service animal. **This helps them to be more able to participate in life.**

In addition, **service animals can give people confidence and opportunity to live life safely** in the face of challenging medical conditions.

The Americans with Disabilities Act protects people with disabilities federally who use service animals in the U.S., **It also sets the rules for public access rights, housing, and employment situations.**

There are additional service dog laws for housing (the Fair Housing Act), air travel (Air Carrier Access Act ), and education, just to name a few. It can get quite complex. Check out our service animal laws by state to learn more about a particular area or check out fake service dog laws by state.



Service animal registration & certification is not required in the U.S. A legitimate ADA federal system does not exist.



Under the ADA laws for public access rights, **service animals must be either a dog or a miniature horse.** No other kinds of animals are accepted.

Dogs and miniature horses are smart and adaptable, and can be trained to do so many different things for people. These things, **known as “work” or “tasks,”** help people with their **disability** or **disabilities**. Keep reading for our full ADA laws summary.

***Please note that this is a general guide on the ADA public access rights and other related laws.** You can also **read about service animals in employment: Service Animal Workplace Accommodations & the ADA laws or What qualifies as a disability for a service dog?**

ADA Service Dog Registration / How to Register a Service Animal


ADA Service Dog Registration is not a thing. Service dogs do not need to be registered, certified, or professionally trained. If you find websites online selling “service dog registration,” “service dog certification,” or anything like that, it’s not legitimate.


These are not recognized by the ADA  nor the Department of Justice.  Buying a piece of paper from the internet does not turn a dog into a service dog or any other kind of dog.

Does the ADA Have a Service Dog Registry?

No, the ADA does not have a service dog registry. **The ADA states that service animals do not need to be registered or certified.** Therefore, if you see “service dog registration” websites online, these are not endorsed or approved in any way by the ADA or Department of Justice.

Some examples of service animal tasks include:

- **Providing stability** for someone who has problems with **balance**, stability, or **walking**
- Helping with navigation for someone who is blind or living with low vision
- Picking up items for **someone who is in a wheelchair**
- Bringing attention to the presence of **allergens** 
- Alerting a person who is deaf or hard of hearing
- Preventing an **autistic child from wandering off**
- **Seizure response**
- Pulling a **wheelchair**
- Helping someone with a **psychiatric or neurological disability** by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors and/or patterns

- Reminding someone living with a **mental illness** to take their prescribed medications
- Waking someone up from a nightmare (PTSD , for example)
- Provide **Deep Pressure Therapy (DPT)** or deep pressure stimulation
- Service animals can do so many different tasks; these are just a few examples

Read more: The Giant List of Service Dog Tasks  (K9 Total Focus)

The ADA is the Americans With Disabilities Act. It is a federal act, and it requires certain things from:

- **State government agencies**
- **Local government agencies**
- **Businesses**
- **Non-profit organizations**

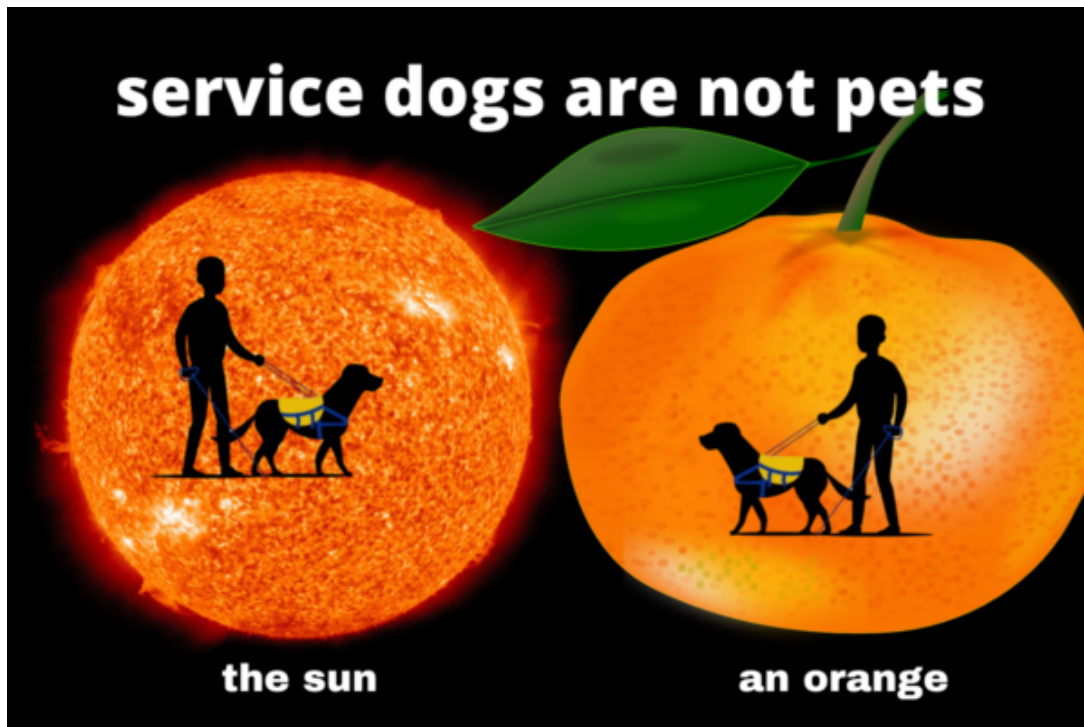
What businesses need to know

Namely, it requires that any “**covered entity**” that provides **goods and services to the general public** (businesses, non-profit, governments, etc.) make **reasonable modifications to their policy, practices, and procedures** in order to make sure **people with disabilities are accommodated**.

No pets policies


Covered entities that have a “**no pets**” **policy**, generally **must modify their policy** to allow **someone with a disability** who uses a **service dog** (or miniature horse) **to access their facility, program, or service**.

Service animals are not pets. They just might look like pets. But I mean, this sun also looks like this orange.



Service animals are not pets, even though they may look like them; kind of like this flaming sun and juicy orange.

1. ADA Service Dog Laws – Service Animal Definition

The official [ADA](#)  service dog laws definition of a service dog, which can be used when considering public access rights, is:

A service animal is defined as a **dog** that has been **individually trained to do work or perform tasks** for an **individual with a disability**. The task(s) performed by the dog must be **directly related to the person's disability**.

[ADA FAQ](#) 

A service dog can be **any breed** and **any size** of dog.

Why Do Service Dogs Wear Goggles?

2. ADA Service Dog Laws Definition of Work or Tasks

Part of the ADA definition of a service animal includes that the **dog does work or tasks for a person with a disability**. But **what does this mean, exactly?**

It means that in order to be a service dog, **a dog must be trained to take some kind of specific action** when it is needed **to help someone with their disability**, or aspects of their disability.

Examples include **alerting someone with diabetes** that their **blood sugar is reaching a dangerously high or low level**. Someone who lives with **epilepsy** or another similar disorder may have a dog that is **trained to detect the onset of a seizure**, and then help to **keep the person safe during the event**.

Service dogs can help people who are living with a **mental disability** to remind them to **take their medication on time**, or could help someone living with PTSD, by **stopping unhelpful behavior, or waking up someone from a nightmare**.

The different tasks that service dogs can do are almost unlimited.

The work or tasks done by the animal must be **directly related** to the person's disability. The **training must be specific** to the person using the animal. **A service animal is not a pet.**

The disability could be:

- Physical
- Sensory
- Psychiatric
- Intellectual
- Or another mental disability



Service animals can help people with a wide variety of different visible and invisible disabilities.

The tasks or work done by the animal may include (but are not limited to) the following:

Helping to guide someone who is **visually impaired or blind**

Alerting a person who is **deaf or hard of hearing**

Pulling a **wheelchair**

Helping someone with **mobility or balance**

Alerting others and protecting someone having a seizure

Retrieving objects

Bringing attention to the presence of **allergens**

Providing **physical support** and help with **balance** and **stability** to someone with a **mobility disability**

Helping someone with a **psychiatric** or **neurological disability** by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors and/or patterns

Reminding someone living with a **mental illness** to take their prescribed medications

Calming someone with **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** during an anxiety attack

Doing other specific work or performing other special tasks

SSigDOG are Sensory Signal Dogs or Social Signal Dogs. These are a service dog that has been trained to assist someone with autism. The service dog typically **alerts their human handler to distracting repetitive movements which are common with people living with autism.** This allows the person to stop the movement.


Psychiatric Service Dogs are a type of service dog that has been trained to perform “work” or “tasks” that help people with psychiatric disabilities to detect the onset of certain, specific episodes and lessen their effects.

Seizure Response Dogs are a type of service dogs that are **trained to help somebody who has a seizure disorder. How the dog serves the person will depend on individual needs.** The seizure response service dog might do a variety of tasks, such as stand guard over their human during a seizure to keep the person safe, or the dog might go and get help.

A few dogs have learned to predict a seizure and warn the person in advance to sit down or move to a safe place, but it seems like this can't reliably be trained in just any dog.

3. Emotional Support Animals, Therapy Animals, Comfort & Companion Animals

These animals (emotional support dogs, therapy dogs, comfort animals, companion animals) **provide comfort just by their presence.** Since they **have not been trained to perform a specific work or task for a specific person's disability,** they **can not be considered service dogs** under the ADA service dog laws definition.

	SERVICE ANIMALS	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS
PUBLIC ACCESS RIGHTS	✓	✗
AIR TRAVEL RIGHTS	✓	✗
HOUSING RIGHTS	✓	✓
TRAINED	✓	✗
REGISTERED/CERTIFIED	✗	✗

“Trained” here means task-trained for a specific disability, which goes well above and beyond the basic socialization and obedience training

However, it’s important to note that **some State and local governments have created service dog laws** and some of these laws **allow people to take an emotional support animal into public places**. So be sure to check with the local and **state laws for your area**.

The Fair Housing Act also has a **more broad definition of assistance animal**, and it includes emotional support animals. These may be different animals from a dog or miniature horse.

So it’s a different story there with emotional support animals being allowed into housing situations as an “assistance animal” for a disability. They aren’t automatically allowed, but can be requested as a “reasonable accommodation.”

4. ADA Service Dog Laws – Dogs for Anxiety & Anxiety Attacks

If you’re wondering whether a **dog that helps someone with their anxiety counts as a service dog**, let’s go back to the original definition. **There is a clear distinction between psychiatric service animals and emotional support animals.**

If a dog has been **specifically trained** for one person’s anxiety, and trained to sense that their anxiety attack is about to happen soon, and then **takes a specific action which helps to avoid the attack** or lessen the attack and related symptoms, **that would qualify as a service animal.**

However, if the dog helps the person by **providing comfort** with it's **mere presence** then it **would not be considered a service animal** under the ADA service dog laws. The dog hasn't been **specifically trained** to do a certain job or task for a specific person.

5. ADA Service Dog Laws – Professional Service Dog Training

Professional service dog training is not a requirement of the ADA. In other words, people who are living with disabilities **have the right to train the dog themselves.**

They and are **not required** to use a **professional service dog training program**, even though there are many of these programs that can and do train many amazing service dogs for people.

Read more: [Service Dog Training Basics & FAQ](#)

6. ADA Service Dog Laws – Service Dogs In Training

Service dogs in training are not considered official service dogs under the ADA. In other words, a service dog in training must completely finish its training before it can be allowed access into public places.

Under the ADA, the dog must already be trained before it can be taken into public places. However, some State or local laws cover animals that are still in training.

ADA

Having said that, most State or local laws do cover dogs that are still in training, so check with your local area to find out for sure.

At this time, **only four states *do not cover* service animals in-training** under their public accommodation laws:


- [Hawaii](#)
- [Michigan](#)
- [Washington](#)
- [Wyoming](#)

People training service dogs in these states are not guaranteed public access. **For the remainder of the states, there are some kind of service dog in training laws in place.** But the details vary, so check with individual states for the complete picture.

[Service Dog In Training Laws by State](#) 

7. ADA Service Dog Laws Information For Businesses (Covered Entities)

Sometimes it's obvious that someone with a disability is using a service dog and that the dog is clearly a service dog. For example, when a dog is guiding someone who is blind or has low vision. Or **when a dog is pulling a wheelchair**.

Other times, it's not so obvious, or not obvious at all. This is because many disabilities are invisible.  In these types of cases, **businesses may only ask two things** to someone who is attempting to bring a service dog into a public place.

What Can You Legally Ask a Person With a Service Animal?

1. "Is this dog a service animal required because of a disability?"
2. "What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?"

The following are not permitted under the ADA service dog laws:

- Asking the person with the service dog for any kind of **documentation**
- Requiring that the dog **perform** or **demonstrate** its **task or work**
- Inquiring about the **details of someone's disability**. This is highly personal information

Question: Can I Refuse a Service Dog in My Business?

Service dogs must not be excluded from a business unless there is a valid reason. If a service dog is excluded without a valid reason, it's discrimination.

Valid reasons to exclude a service dog include:

- If a particular service animal behaves in a way that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others
- If a particular service animal has a history of bad behavior
- If the service dog or miniature horse is not under the control of the handler
- If the person with the service animal doesn't answer the two questions that businesses can ask

8. ADA Service Dog Laws – Service Dog Vests, Harnesses, Patches

A lot of service dogs do wear a vest or harness. But it's important to know that the **ADA service dog laws do not require service animals to wear any of the following**:

- Vest
- ID tag
- Specific harness

Many people may chose to have a vest, harness, or cape for their service animal. It can **help to identify the animal as a working animal** so that (hopefully) the **public will understand to not distract** a service dog team. If you see a service dog without a vest, it could still very well be a legitimate fully trained dog. **Fake service dogs** can be spotted by their (usually) poor behavior.

Read more: Where to buy service dog vests & gear – 19 options

9. ADA Service Dog Laws – Care & Supervision of Service Animals

Service dog handlers are responsible for caring for and supervising their service dog at all times, including when out in public places such as a restaurant or movie theater.

This includes the usual things when caring for an animal: going to the **bathroom, feeding, grooming, and veterinary appointments and care.**

Businesses and any covered entity **aren't responsible** for caring for, or supervising a service animal at any time.

10. ADA Service Dog Laws – Self Service Food Lines (Salad Bar)

Service dogs must be allowed to go to a self service food line or salad bar, as well as cafeterias and communal food preparation areas, dormitories and shelters.

Service dogs may go anywhere that the general public is allowed and/or invited to go, and this is no exception.

11. ADA Service Dog Laws – Hotels

The same rights as other people

People who live with disabilities and use a service dog **have the same rights as others when it comes to hotels.**

This means that the person with the service dog **must be offered the same opportunities to reserve any room that is available**, and not be restricted to “pet friendly” rooms.

Service dogs are not pets; they are living, breathing medical assistance devices that happen to have a tail and four legs.

Fees

Hotels are not allowed to charge someone with a service dog for cleaning the dog's hair or dander that may have been shed.

Having said that, **a hotel can charge the same fee for damages** as it charges to other people, if a service dog for some reason ends up damaging a guest room in the hotel.

No dogs in hotel room alone

Service dogs are not to be left in a hotel room alone, without the handler. The handler must have complete control over the dog at all times.

Read more: [Are Service Dogs Allowed in Hotels?](#)

12. ADA Service Dog Laws on More Than One Service Animal

Generally speaking, **if someone needs more than one service animal, then they are permitted to take more than one with them to a public place.**

Sometimes people will use two animals **if they have two different disabilities**. For example, one service dog could be used for helping the person find their way if they have a visual disability, and another may warn of a seizure about to happen.

Other times, **someone may need two dogs for the same task**, like to help someone with stability when walking.

Accommodating both dogs

Staff can ask the two questions that businesses are allowed to ask, and if both dogs can be accommodated, then they should. However, if it's not possible to accommodate both dogs because of space constraints, one of the dogs can be asked to be left outside.

13. ADA Service Dog Laws – Hospitals

Generally speaking, **service animals must be permitted in hospital patient rooms** and all other places inside a hospital that the general public as well as patients are allowed to go.

They cannot be excluded or denied simply on the basis that the hospital staff can provide the same services for the person.

Patient unable to care for service dog

If a **person with a disability is unable to care for their service animal** due to a hospitalization, **they have a few options**. They could make arrangements for **family or a friend to come to the hospital to help care for the dog**.

This would be the best option, since it's **never a good idea to separate a person and their service dog** unless absolutely necessary.

Alternatively, the friend or **family member could take the dog and care for them during the hospitalization**.

If a patient is **unable to care for their dog**, and is also unable to find someone else to help, then **the hospital may place the dog in a boarding facility until the patient is released**. Or, other arrangements can be made.

The hospital needs to offer the patient a reasonable chance to make their own arrangements for the dog before they put the dog into a boarding facility, or make other arrangements.

14. ADA Service Dog Laws Ambulances

Generally, **service dogs must be permitted to ride in an ambulance with their handler**. **Having said that, however**, if the space in the ambulance is limited, or crowded, **the dog may need to be excluded**.

This is especially true if the **dog's presence would interfere with the emergency staff's ability to treat the person**.

If this happens, **staff need to make other arrangements to have the service dog transported to the hospital to be with the patient**. Service dogs and their handlers should not be separated unless it's absolutely necessary. People with service dogs may benefit from having an emergency plan, especially in the case of a **car accident**.

Read more: [Are Service Dogs Allowed in Hospitals?](#)

15. ADA Service Dog Laws Certification & Registration

ADA Service Dog Laws indicate that **service dogs do not need to be certified**. People who use service dogs **have the right to train the dog themselves**, so many service dogs do not go through professional training.

Businesses are **not permitted to require**:

- **Documentation** that a service dog has been **certified, licensed as a service dog, or trained as a condition for entry**
- **Any kind of proof about the service animal or disability**
- **The service dog to demonstrate its task or work**

You may have noticed that **online** there are some individuals and organizations that sell service dog items, such as certification products and/or registration documents.

These documents and certifications do not convey any rights under the ADA. The Department of Justice does not recognize them as proof that the dog is a service animal.

If you spot someone with these documents, the service dog may or may not be a fake. Many people unfortunately are not informed of the laws.



16. City/Local Dog Licenses & Vaccinations

If the city or town where you live **requires that all dogs be vaccinated**, service dogs are not exempt from this rule, and must comply.

The same applies for local dog licenses. New York City is a **good example of a city that requires all dogs be registered and licensed**.

Mandatory registration of service animals – just because they are service animals – is not allowed under the ADA service dog laws.

17. Voluntary Registration

A voluntary registry like this serves a public purpose. **In the event of an emergency, such as an evacuation, emergency staff will know to look for service animals** that have been registered.

Some offer additional benefits, like **reduced dog licensing fees**. **Registries like this are allowed under the ADA** service dog laws.

Just note that requiring a service dog to be registered as a service animal **as a condition of being permitted entrance** to a public place is a **violation of the ADA service dog laws**.

18. Banning or Excluding Service Animals

Service dogs can be any size, and any breed. A business may not exclude a service dog based on assumptions or stereotypes about the breed. Or, how they think the animal might behave.

If a service dog is showing **bad behavior**, such as going to the bathroom inappropriately, barking, or **posing a direct threat** to the **health and safety** of others, or if it has a history of this behavior, **then it may be excluded**.

Service dogs under control

It may also be excluded **if it is not in control of the handler**. The handler **must have control** over the dog at all times, whether that be with a **leash, harness, or voice control**.

Being asked to leave

If a service dog is excluded for any of those reasons, then the business or entity **must still offer their product or services** to the person who was using the dog, **without the dog being present**.

Banned breeds

If a city or town **prohibits a certain breed of dog**, exceptions must be made for service dogs, unless the service dog is posing a threat to the health and safety of other people or animal.

Businesses and entities may not exclude a service dog based solely on the breed or generalizations about how a certain breed might behave. Each individual case needs to be examined to determine if that particular **animal's history or current behavior** is inappropriate enough to be excluded.

19. ADA Service Dog Laws – Swimming Pools

Public health rules

The ADA service dog laws do not override public health rules. One example being a rule that prohibit dogs in swimming pools.

In other words, if dogs are not allowed in swimming pools as per public health orders, then service dogs are similarly not allowed in the swimming pool.

Change rooms, pool deck

However, service dogs must be allowed in **other areas** where the public is allowed to go, **including change rooms and the pool deck.**

20. Church & Other Places of Worship

Churches, temples, synagogues, mosques, and other religious institutions and organizations are specifically **exempt from the ADA service dog laws.**


However, some individual State laws may apply to religious organizations, so **check with individual states to find out.**

21. ADA Service Dog Laws in Residential Situations

The ADA service dog laws do apply to housing programs that are administered by state and local governments.

Some examples of these include:

- **Public housing authorities**
- **Any places of public accommodation**
- **Public and private universities**


Additionally, the Fair Housing Act  applies to **virtually all and any types of housing**. This includes housing situations that are both **public and privately-owned**, including the housing that is covered by the ADA service dog laws.

The Fair Housing Act uses a slightly different definition to determine which kinds of animals can be considered as a **reasonable accommodation**.

Housing providers are required to permit the use of **animals that work, provide assistance, or perform tasks that help people who are living with disabilities**. Or, it can be an animal that **provides emotional support** to alleviate a symptom or effect of a disability.

Based on this definition, **other animals besides dogs** can be considered as a reasonable accommodation for housing. **Service dogs are permitted in Airbnb's** as per their policy.

22. ADA Service Dog Laws – Commercial Airlines

Commercial airlines do not need to comply with the ADA service dog laws, because **the Air Carrier Access Act**  **protects the rights of people with disabilities in air travel**. It is a federal law. The ADA does still apply in airport terminals.

Read more: American Airlines Service Dog Info – The Easy Guide

23. Miniature Horses & The ADA Service Animal Laws

Technically speaking, with the updated ADA laws, **dogs are the only permitted type of animal defined as a service animal** for disabled people where the ADA public access rights are concerned.

However, the ADA has a separate and specific provision that covers miniature horses. **The rules that apply to service dogs also apply to miniature horses.**

Businesses must make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the miniature horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with a disability.

Americans with Disabilities Act 

Businesses and other covered entities can use the following **factors** to help **in determining whether a miniature horse could potentially be accommodated** safely at their location.

1. The miniature horse **must be housebroken** (“goes to the bathroom” appropriately)
2. The miniature horse **must be under control** of its owner at all times, the same as service dogs
3. Can the facility **safely accommodate** the miniature horse’s **type, size, and weight**?
4. The miniature horse’s presence **must not compromise legitimate safety requirements** that are necessary for the safe operation of the facility or business. This must be based upon actual fact, not speculation, assumptions, or fears

Just like service dogs, **a miniature horse meets the criteria** of a service animal **when it has been individually trained to do work or perform certain, specific task for someone with a disability.**

However, businesses and other public places may limit access based on the mini horse’ height and weight



“Flirty” the Mini Service Horse

This is different from the rules for service dogs. Service dogs can be any size, any type, any breed of dog, even pit bulls.

A bit more about miniature horses...

- They can live longer than both dogs and regular horses, about 25-30 years
- They have great eye sight, peripheral vision, as well as night vision
- They can push or pull heavy objects more easily than most dogs
- Among many other things, of course, they can help stabilize a person with balance difficulties, or help to stop someone from falling

24. Where Does the ADA Apply?

- Places of **public accommodation** which include...
- Places of **lodging**
- Places serving **food or drink**
- Places of **entertainment**
- Places of **public gathering**
- **Sales or rental establishments**

- **Service** establishments
- Stations used for specified **public transportation**
- Places of public display or collection
- Places of **recreation**
- Places of **education**
- Social service center establishments
- Places of **exercise** or recreation
- **Public services, programs, and activities**, which include: schools, and state and local government offices
- **Public transportation**
- **Private transportation**, like Greyhound bus service
- The workplace
- Airport terminals
- **Airbnb**
- **National Parks**

More Info & Help With ADA Assistance

If you need more information or assistance directly from the Americans with Disabilities Act,



there are several options:

ADA Information Line



The Department of Justice  operates a toll-free **ADA Information Line** to provide the public with information and materials regarding the requirements of the **ADA**.

ADA Specialists can help people who phone in to understand how the ADA applies to their particular situation. All calls are confidential. They are available:

- **Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday** from 9:30 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. and again from 3:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. (Eastern Time)
- **Thursday** from 2:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. (Eastern Time)

To get answers to technical questions, obtain general ADA information, order free ADA materials, or ask about filing a complaint, you can call:

800-514-0301 (voice);

800-514-0383 (TTY)

ADA Information Line



Mailing address:**Disability Rights Section Mailing Address**

U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
4CON, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20530

Section Phone Number

(202) 307-0663

Section Fax Number

(202) 307-1197

Publications by mail

ADA regulations, technical assistance materials and publications are available in standard print as well as in alternate formats for people with disabilities. Call the ADA Information Line 24-hours a day to order through the automated system.

Contact ADA 

SERVICE ANIMAL LAWS BY STATE