

American Airlines announces changes to policies for travel with emotional support and service animals

[American Airlines](#) has announced upcoming changes to policies and procedures for travel with emotional support animals and service animals, aligning with regulations recently issued by the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#) (DOT). The new policies and procedures are intended to support customers with disabilities and the service animals that travel with them, as well as the team members who work to keep customers safe.

“Our team is motivated by a purpose to care for people on life’s journey, and we believe these policy changes will improve our ability to do just that,” said Jessica Tyler, President of Cargo and Vice President of Airport Excellence for American Airlines. “We’re confident this approach will enable us to better serve our customers, particularly those with disabilities who travel with service animals, and better protect our team members at the airport and on the aircraft.”

The DOT’s new rule defines a service animal as a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a qualified individual with a disability — a narrower definition than in the past. When the rule goes into effect on January 11, American will no longer authorize travel for animals that do not meet the definition, such as emotional support animals. Existing bookings involving emotional support animals will be honored through February 1, when the airline’s new policies go into effect, reads the January 5 press release.

Starting February 1, to ensure accessible travel for individuals with disabilities while protecting the safety and well-being of customers and team members, the airline will ask customers traveling with service animals to complete a DOT form attesting to the dog’s behavior, training and health. The airline will require this form to be submitted electronically 48 hours in advance of a flight, unless the reservation is booked within 48 hours of travel. A service animal’s authorization will be valid for one year or until the expiration of its vaccinations. Animals that previously traveled as emotional support animals and no longer qualify as service animals may travel as carry-on pets or as cargo pets, as long as they meet the requirements. American is reaching out to customers who are expected to be impacted by these changes. The service animal forms, along with additional details about the airline’s new policy, will be available on [aa.com](#) in the coming days.