

The Two Questions: Service Dog Rights Card

What a business may ask under the ADA — and what it may not.

Keep this on your phone or in your wallet. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, when it isn't obvious what a service dog does, staff may ask only two questions — and no registration, certificate, ID, or vest is ever required.

This is a rights-education reference, not an ID or certification. Service dogs are not required to be registered or certified under the ADA, and no such credential officially exists.

The two questions a business may ask

- 1) Is the dog required because of a disability?
- 2) What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

That is the entire permitted inquiry. If the dog's job is already obvious — a guide dog in harness, say — staff shouldn't ask even these.

What staff may NOT do

Staff may not ask about your disability or diagnosis, require documentation, ID, registration, or certification, ask the dog to demonstrate its task, charge a pet fee, or refuse you because of another customer's allergy or fear of dogs.

When a service dog can be asked to leave

Only if the dog is out of control and the handler doesn't take effective action to control it, or if the dog isn't housebroken. Even then, the business must offer to serve you without the dog present.

Handler tip: you can answer both questions in one calm sentence — for example, “Yes, she's required because of a disability, and she's trained to alert me to a sound.” You never owe more than that.