

# Renting with a Service Animal or an Emotional Support Animal

By law, you may not be denied or treated differently in the rental, sale, financing, or insuring of housing anywhere in Virginia on the basis of any of the protected classes you belong to including race, color, national origin, religion, gender, disability, familial status, being over 55 years old, source of funds, military status, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

**Under the Fair Housing Act, you have the right to ask your landlord or property manager for a reasonable accommodation for a service animal or an emotional support animal for your disability-related need.** Housing providers are required to make reasonable accommodations, meaning changes in “rules, policies, practices and procedures” if the change is necessary to allow a person with a disability full use and enjoyment of their housing. Animals that help alleviate symptoms of a disability can be considered service animals or emotional support animals.



## How to assert your fair housing rights:

- It's best practice to request a reasonable accommodation from your landlord in writing.
- Service animals and emotional support animals are **NOT considered pets** and you should not be charged pet rent, pet deposit, or other pet fees. A reasonable accommodation can be made to allow for the animal to be exempt from fees or allow the animal despite a “no pets” policy.
- A landlord can request disability-related documentation **ONLY** if the disability or disability-related need for the animal is not obvious. The letter can be written by your doctor, therapist, or other licensed health care professional. The letter does **NOT** need to list what your disability is, only that you **HAVE** a disability and an emotional support animal is needed because of the disability.

**Service animals and emotional support animals are not the same, though both are covered by fair housing laws. What is the difference?**

### Service Animal

Trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.

Can only be specially trained dogs (and some cases miniature horses)

Entities must permit service animals to accompany people with disabilities in areas where members of the public are allowed to go.

### Emotional Support Animal

Are not required to undergo special training.

Can be any animal that provides emotional support or relief from disability-related symptoms.

Must be allowed in all common areas of your community, but may not be allowed in places of business.



**You have a right to fair housing, HOME of VA can help!**

**Report Housing Discrimination at [HOMEofVA.org/Report](https://HOMEofVA.org/Report)**

[FairHousing@HOMEofVA.org](mailto:FairHousing@HOMEofVA.org) • 804-354-0641 • VA Relay 711

**Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia** can help determine if you have been discriminated against, and may help you seek the remedies that are available to everyone under fair housing laws. As a non-profit provider, our services are provided statewide and are **free and confidential**.

[HOMEofVA.org/SA-ESA](https://HOMEofVA.org/SA-ESA)