

Report back to the ACCESS Advisory Committee**July 8, 2016****Candace Kolander, AFA**

During the June 14-15 ACCESS Advisory Committee meeting there was substantial discussion about definitions of traditional service animals and other types of service animals that can include emotional support animals or psychiatric service animals. As the meeting continued the discussion led to the idea of compiling data on reports or issues around service animals and emotional support animals. One member of the group suggested the data review should be more specific to also reference "psychiatric service animals." One air carrier representative at the meeting stated that their data did not break out the might not break out all the different types of animals in their reporting forms, specifically psychiatric service animals. AFA agreed, and also mentioned that this could be an issue because we were unsure how many flight attendant manuals specifically reference psychiatric service animals. Further, we did not know if flight attendants are trained on the differences between an emotional support animal and a psychiatric service animal. We agreed to reach out to our safety chairs to gather some additional information.

AFA informally surveyed flight attendant safety representatives from multiple air carriers. We received responses related to policies and procedures at 18 different air carriers. The following four questions were sent out to the safety representatives. Below each question is a summary of the responses received.

1) Does your FAM (flight attendant manual) distinguish between emotional support animals and psychiatric service animals?

All the responses were in agreement that psychiatric service animals were not recognized as a stand-alone type animal. They were either included in the references related to service animals or emotional support animals. This co-mingling of the animal type in with those two groups made it sometimes difficult for the respondent to determine if the animal would be considered a service animal or an emotional support animal. One commenter noted their FAM opened with the service animal section with a list of common terms for services animals or the functions they perform include: assistance animals, hearing/seeing eye dog, signal animal, seizure alert, psychiatric service, emotional support, and comfort animal.

2) Does any boarding paperwork reference either of these two types of animals? Or does the boarding paperwork just reference emotional support animal, thereby assuming they are one and the same?

Boarding paperwork and flight attendant manuals tended to break the types of animals into three groups. They were:

- Service Animal
- Emotional Support Animal
- Pet in the cabin (in an animal carrier and under the seat in front)

As noted above, although there was no clear guidance as to where psychiatric service animals would actually be listed on the paperwork, the FA would simply note one of the three types of animal listed on the boarding paperwork and treat the animal according to the specifics for that animal type.

3) Have you received any training on the specific differences between an emotional support animal and psychiatric service animal?

All the responses were the same – no.

4) As a flight attendant, would you know the difference between an emotional support animal and a psychiatric service animal?

All the responses were the same – no, they would not be able to differentiate between the two types of animals. It should be noted that some of the responses said they normally are able to determine if the animal is a “service animal” because of their behavior.

In conclusion, any data or questions related to issues, concerns or problems should not include a specific request to break out psychiatric service animals as a stand-alone type animal as it appears this animal type would be captured in the category of either service animal or emotional support animal.