

# COMFORT ANIMALS THE ESSENTIAL DO'S & DON'TS GUIDE



## SERVICE VS. SUPPORT ANIMALS: A GUIDE FOR PROPERTY MANAGERS

Understanding the legal distinctions between service animals and emotional support animals (ESAs) is crucial for Hawaii property managers to ensure compliance and maintain positive tenant relationships.

### SERVICE ANIMALS

Under the ADA, service animals are trained dogs that assist people with disabilities, such as guiding the blind or aiding during seizures. They're allowed in public places and housing.



### SUPPORT ANIMALS

ESAs offer comfort for emotional or psychological conditions but aren't trained for specific tasks. They're protected under the Fair Housing Act for housing accommodations but lack public access rights.

## DO'S FOR PROPERTY MANAGERS

### ACCOMMODATE VALID REQUESTS

Under the FHA, property managers must consider and accommodate valid requests for assistance animals, including ESAs.

### REQUEST PROPER DOCUMENTATION

For ESAs, you can request current, valid documentation from a licensed healthcare professional confirming the disability and need for the animal.

### EDUCATE STAFF AND TENANTS

Train your team on service animal and ESA differences, and inform tenants about assistance animal policies for compliance.

### MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

Handle all information regarding a tenant's disability and need for an assistance animal with confidentiality, sharing details only with those who need to know.

## DON'TS FOR PROPERTY MANAGERS

### CHARGE ADDITIONAL FEES

Do not charge extra fees for service animals or ESAs, as they are not pets and additional charges may be discriminatory.

### INQUIRE ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE DISABILITY

Avoid asking tenants for disability details; only request verification of the need for an assistance animal.

### DENY REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION WITHOUT JUST CAUSE

Refusing a valid assistance animal request without clear evidence can lead to legal issues.

### IGNORE STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS

Stay updated on Hawaii laws and federal regulations to ensure compliance with assistance animal rules.

By following these guidelines, Hawaii property managers can manage comfort animals effectively, ensure legal compliance, and create a supportive environment. Regular policy reviews and staying updated on legal changes will help maintain best practices.

*For more details, refer to the Hawaii Disability and Communication Access Board's resources on service and assistance animals.*

