

Service Dog (SD) vs Emotional Support Animal (ESA)

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Animals have long shared this earth with man; dogs represent humanities oldest friend, unconditional love, and the perfect partner. The social bond between man and dog is extremely strong. This lends itself perfectly to train dogs to perform useful lifesaving tasks. A Service Dog (SD) allows an individual to carry out daily functions despite having a disability. SDs are trained for specific tasks for their handler's (owner's) needs. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protect the SD and allows the dog the perform tasks that would otherwise inhibit the individual from everyday life and their capacity to function. Some of these specific tasks may include seeing eye dog, alerting for deaf individuals, people with diabetes, seizures, or an unsteady gait and tasks for people who are para or quadriplegic. Additionally, therapeutic value has been reported in the use of service dogs for depression, anxiety, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)-particularly in military personnel. Alternately, Emotional Support Animals (ESA) can be any animal that is trained to provide support to someone for an emotional need. The therapeutic benefit is derived from the companionship of the animal and the person. This could be provided by a dog; however, it could also be provided by a rabbit, cat, horse, duck, parrot, chinchilla, or most other animals, hence the term ESA. ESAs undergo training to provide emotional support and comfort. The ESAs frequently interact with other people besides their owner. ESAs are used therapeutically by healthcare providers to augment or enhance treatment plans and are useful in all types of patient care. ESAs have been utilized in the following areas: behavioral health, cardiac, palliative, hospice stroke, and pediatrics. ESAs provide their owners, and others, with therapeutic benefits through companionship and can be any animal but are not generally protected under the ADA. The benefit of healthcare providers collaborating with handlers is for the betterment of the patients.

Biography: Dr. Esposito Kubanick has been an RN for over 35 years with Board Certification in Psychiatry and Mental Health. She is PhD prepared and teaches as an Assistant Professor in nursing for both undergraduate and graduate programs. Dr. Esposito Kubanick has conducted research in EI, pain in patients with substance use and is also a strong advocate for people with disabilities. She provides service for inpatients and outpatients with her therapy dog.

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