

## **Fake Service Dogs - An Epidemic?**

An opinion piece by Jay Johnson

Some people claim to have a "service dog", a "companion dog" or a "therapy dog" in order to gain residence in pet regulated housing. The ADA (American Disability Act) makes it clear that withholding housing from individuals with a genuine disability, who use service dogs, is a crime. Because of this law, individuals are "playing the system" in order to move into housing with dogs not usually allowed, like akitas, bulldogs, and pit bulls.

In some cases multiple dogs, a number increased over that normally allowed in some projects, are housed because of claims that that a high number of dogs is needed to provide the home owner with services or comfort.

Many of these dogs are simply pets, but are passed-off as something more.

How can one know if a dog is a real service dog or a genuine comfort dog or a legitimate therapy dog? In a word, ask the dog.

Service dogs, comfort dogs, and therapy dogs are expressly well behaved. They do not threaten other dogs or people; they do not bark or growl at other dogs or strangers; they do not defecate or urinate in inappropriate places or times. The training for these dogs can be extensive and cost thousands of dollars.

If you think a dog in your community is not a legitimate service, comfort or therapy dog because of its poor behavior, report your concerns to your housing manager, talk to your HOA officers, or communicate with your local pet club. To allow this scam to continue only makes it difficult for individuals who really need these wonderful animals to have them and use them successfully.

**More importantly, IT IS A CRIME!**

Remember that it is an honor to have and enjoy the life of your pet. Honor it, and don't use it or abuse it to gain an advantage in the housing system or airlines.