

Emotional Support Dogs

Emotional Support Dogs (also sometimes referred to as psychiatric support dogs) are dogs that provide comfort and support in forms of affection and companionship for an individual diagnosed with a specific mental or emotional condition. An emotional support dog is not required to perform any specific tasks for a disability like service dogs or guide dogs are trained for and required to perform.

Registered Guide Dogs and Service Dogs in South Africa are protected by law and may not be denied access into stores, centres and other public places. Any discrimination will bring dire consequences not only legally but also in reputational terms for anyone denying or restricting access to such working dogs. **Emotional Support and Medical Alert Dogs in SA do not have this right of admission yet.** There is no officially recognised or registered system relating to assistance dogs for these conditions and circumstantial evaluation of each instance will be needed.

Although we acknowledge and promote the role of dogs as personal companions and the therapeutic value of positive interaction with companion animals, **PAT does not register, select, train or assess emotional support dogs.** The main aim of PAT is to assess companion dogs and their human companions as volunteers for Animal Assisted Activities such as visits to old age homes, children's homes, homes and places of safety for children and adults with disabilities etc.

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