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Southwest Airlines Updates Service Animal Policies

Changes will go into effect on September 17 to provide clearer guidelines for Customers

DALLAS, Aug. 14, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- [Southwest Airlines Co.](#) (NYSE:LUV) today announces changes to its policies for trained service and emotional support animals. The changes are designed to provide clearer guidance to Customers traveling with service animals and will go into effect on Monday, September 17.

"We welcome emotional support and trained service animals that provide needed assistance to our Customers," said Steve Goldberg, Senior Vice President of Operations and Hospitality. "However, we want to make sure our guidelines are clear and easy to understand while providing Customers and Employees a comfortable and safe experience."

To create these policy changes, Southwest reviewed the recent enforcement guidance issued by the Department of Transportation (DOT), evaluated feedback from Customers and Employees, and spoke with numerous advocacy groups that represent Customers with disabilities who travel with service animals. Based upon the guidance received, Southwest will enact the following changes on September 17:

Emotional Support Animals (ESAs)

- ESAs will be limited to only dogs and cats
- ESAs will be limited to one per Customer
- ESAs must remain in a carrier or be on a leash at all times

Customers traveling with ESAs will still need to present a complete, current letter from a medical doctor or licensed mental health professional on the day of departure.

Trained Service Animals

- In alignment with recent DOT guidance, Southwest will accept only the most common service animals—dogs, cats, and miniature horses. For the health and safety of our Customers and Employees, unusual or exotic animals will not be accepted.

As is the case today, the Customer with the disability must be able to provide credible verbal assurance that the animal is a trained service animal.

Formally Recognizing Psychiatric Support Animals (PSAs)

Southwest also will introduce an enhancement that recognizes fully-trained psychiatric support animals (PSAs) as trained service animals. Southwest informally accepted PSAs as trained service animals in the past and the airline is pleased to formalize the acceptance of this type of service animal based upon Customer feedback. PSAs are individually trained to

perform a task or work for a person with a mental health-related disability. A credible verbal assurance will be sufficient to travel with a PSA.

For the safety of both Southwest's Customers and Employees, all emotional support and service animals must be trained to behave in a public setting and must be under the control of the handler at all times. An animal that engages in disruptive behavior may be denied boarding.

"The ultimate goal with these changes is to ensure Customers traveling with service animals know what to expect when choosing Southwest," said Goldberg. "Southwest will continue working with advocacy groups, Employees, Customers, and the DOT to ensure we offer supportive service animal guidelines."

ABOUT SOUTHWEST AIRLINES CO.

In its 48th year of service, Dallas-based [Southwest Airlines Co.](#) (NYSE: LUV) continues to differentiate itself from other air carriers with exemplary Customer Service delivered by more than 57,000 Employees to a Customer base topping 120 million passengers annually, in recent years. Southwest became the nation's largest domestic air carrier in 2003 and maintains that ranking based on the U.S. Department of Transportation's most recent reporting of domestic originating passengers boarded. During peak travel seasons, Southwest operates more than 4,000 weekday departures among a network of 99 destinations in the United States and 10 additional countries. Southwest has announced its intention to sell tickets in 2018 for service to Hawaii, subject to requisite governmental approvals.

Southwest coined [Transfarency](#)[®] to describe its purposed philosophy of treating Customers honestly and fairly, and low fares actually staying low. Southwest is the only major U.S. airline to offer bags fly free[®] to everyone (first and second checked pieces of luggage, size and weight limits apply, some carriers offer free checked bags on select routes or in qualified circumstances), and there are no change fees, though fare differences might apply.

As launch customer of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 in North America, the Company operates the largest fleet in the world of Boeing aircraft.

With a bold new look first unveiled in 2014, Southwest is progressing through a multi-year refresh of its fleet to showcase the carrier's *Heart*: a new logo, aircraft livery, interior design featuring new seats, Employee-designed uniforms, and an updated airport experience, all of which showcase a dedication of Southwest Employees to connect Customers with what's important in their lives.

From its first flights on June 18, 1971, Southwest Airlines launched an era of unprecedented affordability in air travel described by the U.S. Department of Transportation as "The Southwest Effect," a lowering of fares and increase in passenger traffic wherever the carrier serves. With 45 consecutive years of profitability, Southwest is one of the most honored airlines in the world, known for a triple bottom line approach that contributes to the carrier's performance and productivity, the importance of its People and the communities they serve, and an overall commitment to efficiency and the planet. The 2017 Southwest Airlines One Report can be found at [SouthwestOneReport.com](#).

Book Southwest Airlines' low fares online at [Southwest Airlines](#) or by phone at 800-I-FLY-SWA.

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