

# New ACAA DOT Rule

Scope: Americas  
Applicability: All Ground  
Issued on: 01/23/2025

## Effective January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has issued a final rule amending the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) regulations related to passengers requiring assistance, the stowage of assistive devices, and the process for handling or compensating damage to these devices.

These updated regulations apply to all passengers and air carrier flights departing to or through the United States.

The DOT has also expanded what qualifies as a violation of the ACAA.

**Please review the following key clarifications to ensure services comply with the updated standards and guidelines:**

- All airport representatives **MUST** be familiar with the role of a Complaint Resolution Officer (CRO), including what they do and how to contact one.
- CROs are trained professionals who assist with disability-related complaints and have the authority to resolve these issues on behalf of the air carrier.
- Every passenger has the right to speak with a CRO and must be informed of this right.
- CROs must be available 24/7, either by phone or in person.
- Please ensure you know who the CROs are for the air carriers you represent. (In many locations, they are often members of management, either directly or indirectly associated with the air carrier).



## Wheelchair Assistance

When providing wheelchair assistance, it must be completed in a safe and dignified manner:

- Speak directly to the passenger with the disability unless instructed otherwise.
- Communicate our process for assisting the passenger (and expected delay time, if necessary)
- Permit a restroom stop to or from the gate if time permits (without missing the flight).
- Passenger aisle wheelchair transfers should be promptly completed out of the view of others whenever possible.
- Assist passengers to and from the gate promptly and safely.
- Be ready to assist passengers deplaning immediately after the last able-bodied passenger steps off the aircraft.
- If a passenger is assisted into the gate area and must wait to be assisted towards the baggage claim, communicate the process and approximate wait time.
- When assisting passengers to the gate and/or boarding the aircraft, verbally remind them to remain seated upon landing until all other passengers have deplaned.

**NOTE:** ACAA regulations state that a passenger who has requested assistance and is not independently mobile cannot be left unattended for more than 30 minutes, even if traveling with another passenger unless the passenger explicitly waives the obligation.



## Preboarding

- Passengers with disabilities or those requiring extra time to board may request to preboard.
- Do not inquire about the nature of a passenger's disability.

**NOTE:** If a passenger is not present in the boarding area when pre-boarding concludes, they may wait until the final stages of the boarding process for assistance. Air carriers are not obligated to disrupt the boarding process to accommodate passengers.

Effective communication with the downline station is essential for assisting passengers who need help or are traveling with assistive devices. Please ensure proper computer edits and notifications are complete and in accordance with the air carrier's procedures.

## Gate or Ticket Counter Checked Devices

When accepting a mobility device for transport:

- Inspect the device thoroughly before accepting it, checking for any damage (similar to how you would inspect a rental car), and document any findings.
- Ask passengers to remove any detachable or fragile items and stow them in the overhead bin.
- Secure all assistive devices in the cargo hold using approved methods (such as straps or tie-downs).

**NOTE:** If a wheelchair or scooter cannot be safely transported, notify the passenger immediately. The passenger will have the option to deplane and be re-accommodated on another flight at no additional cost, or receive a full refund to their original payment method.



A CRO must be contacted before denying transport. Assistive devices should be removed from the cargo hold FIRST (before other baggage) and delivered to the aircraft door or the bottom of the boarding ramp.

Personal Manual Wheelchairs: Folding, collapsible, or breakdown manual wheelchairs can be stowed inside the aircraft cabin, depending on the carrier and aircraft type.

The in-cabin wheelchair is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

### **Damaged & Mishandled Assistive Devices**

All damage, mishandled, or pilfered claims for an assistive device should be accepted by the station representative and promptly provided to the air carrier management and/or CRO, including:

- any reported damages
- items that did not arrive at the destination
- stolen items claims

The DOT requires immediate notification to the passenger if an assistive device is damaged during loading or offloading. Contact a CRO for guidance.

If a device is loaded onto the wrong aircraft or not loaded onto the aircraft, immediately contact the other station to locate the device and submit the **REQUIRED** report according to the specific air carrier training.