



7 Considerations for Traveling by Air

Delta Air Lines Travel Recommendations for Families with Developmental Disabilities

(1) Trouble-Shooting Your Travel Experience:

Delta offers “dry run” travel experiences (based on availability and operational needs) for travelers who would like to become acquainted with what to expect during air travel, before they fly. This includes the ability to experience check in, going through security and through to the gate. This can be helpful for people with developmental disabilities who need familiarization with new environments and experiences. It is important to note that airlines are interested in providing accessible travel so they can address barriers that are identified. It is your responsibility to anticipate and identify potential barriers.

(2) Take Time to Understand the “Rules of the Air”

Traveling can be an adventure if you have a map. Knowing that the airline industry runs on tight schedules allows you to plan your travel day and develop contingency plans. The most important rule to remember is that you have to **be flexible**. Air travel is one of the most reliable and safe ways to travel but it is also subject to flight delays, mechanical breakdowns and other safety and security concerns. Travel should also be fun if you’ve planned ahead. **Choose seats that provide foot space** below so you can stow your carry on items at your feet so these items will be in close proximity to you for your flight. Based on the need of your child, **get your seats in advance** so you can get a location that will help you manage your disability.

Customers with disabilities are entitled to any seat on the aircraft that they are qualified to sit in however, carriers are not required to move other customers to accommodate most individuals with a disability. **Ask to pre-board** so you will have the opportunity to get onboard the aircraft a few moments ahead of the general boarding to settle in prepare for the trip. If you pre-board, you will be allowed onboard early for your convenience, but deplaned last for your safety. Also, remember that people without disabilities rarely understand people with disabilities. **Be ready to educate**. Carry an information card about your child that you can share with gate agents or flight attendants. If you find yourself getting frustrated with an agent, **ask to have a Complaint Resolution Official (CRO) join the conversation**. Carriers are required to provide a CRO if one is requested.

(3) Verbalize Expectations:

- a. Due to Department of Transportation (DOT) non-discrimination laws, airlines cannot directly solicit information from passengers about their disability and cannot advertise specific travel assistance that would draw attention to a person's disability at the airport. However, you can ***self identify your specific needs***, by providing as much information as you wish, will be noted in the airlines reservation system and be seen whenever viewed on a computer screen by airline employees and service providers. Airlines are most interested in what services you will need to address challenges of the disability. The more you share about your travel needs, the better the airline will be prepared to assist you. Please recognize that the carrier cannot and will not ask questions outside the range of providing service. If this occurs, please ask to speak to a Complaint Resolution Official.
- b. ***Explain what is needed to manage the person's disability.*** It is not necessary to bring a note from a physician to support individual travel needs that conflict with current restrictions. Carriers accept the credible verbal assurance of a customer's needs. Medications should also be kept in prescription packaging and separately packed from your checked baggage. Medication in a separate bag is considered an assistive device and not subject to baggage limitations.
- c. ***Request your assistance needs well in advance*** and allow for extra time on the day of travel for security screening and pre-boarding processes. Always be prepared for changes in the weather and bring along items in the event there is an extended delay.
- d. ***Book online and then call the airline.*** Get your best fare online but when it's secured, call the airline's reservation office to add Special Service Requests (SSRs) and to discuss your specific need for assistance. You can reach Delta at 800-221-1212. You may be transferred to the CRO Desk for assistance.
- e. ***For additional assistance, Complaint Resolution Officials (CROs)*** are available at all airport locations and assist with disability needs. CROs have been specially trained to assist in protecting the rights of customers with disabilities as outlined in the Air Carrier Access Act. If you are away from the airport, Delta's CRO Desk in Reservations can help.

(4) Take Advantage of the Short Cuts

Customers with disabilities are priority passengers, meaning they may pre-board aircraft, when families with small children are asked to board. In order to pre-board, you must meet all check-in requirements and notify the gate agent of your intention to pre-board the flight. Pre-boarding on Delta begins about 35 minutes prior to departure and prior to General Boarding – Zone 1.

(5) Manage Your Time in Security

Private security screenings are available upon request with TSA. Always declare any items that may be questionable or substances that are used to manage the disability. Liquid and Gel bans apply. All customers must be thoroughly screened before accessing secured areas like the gates and access to the aircraft.

(6) Self-Advocate

Know your rights and the applicable laws for travelers with disabilities. The Air Carrier Access Act (14 CFR 382) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in air travel and requires air carriers to accommodate the needs of passengers with disabilities. You can find a printable copy on Delta.com – see http://images.delta.com.edgesuite.net/delta/pdfs/14cfr_part382.pdf, to find a PDF format of the current rule. If you believe that you need additional assistance, Delta has specially trained agents called Complaint Resolution Officials (CROs) at every airport and in our Reservations Office. Just ask to speak to one and one will be brought to you or by phone.

(7) Get the Lay-of-the-Land

Know the layout of the airport. The lower curb check-in at Hartsfield-Jackson is a full service check in and great place for drop off and pick up for those who need less traffic and noise than the main drop off points. Check the airport websites for color coded maps that show elevators and other access tools.

For More Information:

For more information about traveling as a passenger with a disability, please see our website at

http://images.delta.com.edgesuite.net/delta/pdfs/Delta_Disability_Brochure_09_06-13-08.pdf