

## **Have Dog – Will Travel**

*Penny Hartin, World Blind Union, Toronto, Canada (presenter) and guide dog  
“Chicory” (assistant presenter)*

For close to 100 years now, blind persons have been using guide dogs as an effective mobility tool to enhance their personal mobility and independence. Over the years, this use of a trained service animal has expanded to many other types of disabilities as well with the result that service animals are widely used by persons with disabilities in many parts of the world. Many travelers with disabilities now expect to travel with their service animals, but due to a lack of international standards, variations in legislation, awareness, education and training, travel with a service animal can be difficult and complex.

The presenter is a person with severe low vision who has travelled internationally with her guide dog for many years. She will share experiences related to import and export requirements, transportation access, access to accommodations and food services, access to taxis and cultural venues. And she will share stories of good practice as well as those where there is room for improvement. Many service providers are very welcoming and do a good job accommodating service dogs.

Others fail to train their staff in the laws, and their negative attitudes and insensitivity can cause stress, fear and frustration. Some countries have not modernized their laws and so travelling with a service dog can become difficult to impossible.

Travelling with a service dog brings with it many benefits including: enhanced mobility, ease in learning new routes, personal safety and security. So it is very much worth the extra effort that it takes to make arrangements to travel with one's service dog.