

Columbia College Service and Emotional Support Animal Policy

Columbia College does not generally permit students to bring pets or animals on campus. However, according to the Fair Housing Regulations, a college must provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities who require the assistance of service or emotional support animals. For animals to be designated as a service or emotional support animal, students are required to demonstrate that their animal is a reasonable accommodation for a physical, emotional, or mental health disability. Disability is defined as an impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. The health and safety of all residents in campus housing is a priority at the College. Accordingly, the needs of the individual with the disability and also the potential impact of such animals on other residents must be taken into consideration.

Service Animals

A "service animal" means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the person's disability. The provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship does not constitute work or tasks for the purpose of this definition. Species other than dogs or, in some cases, miniature horses, are not considered service animals for the purpose of this definition of a service animal. Service animals will be permitted to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of Columbia College's facilities where students, members of the public, and other participants in services, programs or activities are allowed to go.

Therapy/Emotional Support Animals

A "therapy/emotional support animal" is an animal selected to play an integral part of a person's treatment process that demonstrates a good temperament and reliable, predictable behavior. A therapy/emotional support animal is prescribed to an individual with a disability by a healthcare or mental health professional. A therapy/emotional support animal is not a service animal. Unlike a service animal, a therapy/emotional support animal does not assist a person with a disability with activities of daily living, nor does it accompany a person with a disability at all the times. However, a therapy/emotional support animal may be incorporated into a treatment process to assist in alleviating the symptoms of that individual's disability. This treatment occurs within the person's residence and therefore may be considered for access to university housing, but these animals will not be allowed in classrooms, dining halls, or other areas of campus outside the residence of the student.

Process for Requesting a Service or Emotional Support Animal

Service and emotional support animals may not reside in College housing without the express written approval of college officials. Such requests should be processed as follows:

- A. A resident requesting a service or emotional support animal must provide the Office of Disability Services with appropriate documentation at least 30 days before prospective housing will be needed. Advance notice is required in order to gather and verify the necessary documentation for the student. This documentation includes, but is not limited to: verification of a disability, the determination of any conflicting disabilities in the immediate

vicinity where the animal will be housed, and verification of all vaccinations and the health of the animal, including all the necessary licensing and training information. If documentation is immediately available, the time for the approval process may be shortened.

B. Documentation of the need for a service or emotional support animal should include a signed letter, on professional letterhead, from the student's physical or mental healthcare provider or licensed therapist. The provider or therapist should be familiar with the professional literature concerning the assistive and/or therapeutic benefits of assistance animals for people with disabilities. A copy of the service or emotional support animal certification form or ID card from the agency or organization that provided the training should also be provided by the training agency or organization. If the animal is trained by the owner or another private individual, a brief statement to that effect is all that is required. At a minimum, the letter should include the following items:

1. The provider's diagnosis of the student's condition.
2. The provider's opinion that the condition affects a major life activity.
3. The provider's opinion that the service or emotional support animal has been prescribed for treatment purposes and is necessary to help alleviate symptoms associated with the student's condition and/or to help the person use and enjoy campus housing services.
4. The provider's description of the service(s) that the animal provides in the case of a service animal.
5. Any additional rationale or statement the College may reasonably need to understand the basis for the professional opinion.
6. The Office of Disability Services staff members will review documentation, and if the College determines a qualifying disability exists, they shall arrange a meeting with the Director of Residence Life and Housing and the resident requesting that a service or emotional support animal be housed in campus housing. The College's Service and Emotional Support Animal Policy will be carefully reviewed with the person at that time, and an interactive dialogue will take place to determine whether the animal is a reasonable accommodation, considering alternative accommodations and the impact of the animal on the campus housing program. If the request is approved, the resident will be permitted to have service animal or emotional support animal reside in the residence halls. The Director of Residence Life and Housing will notify the resident's suitemate and other individuals who may be impacted by the service or emotional support animal in the building.

Conflicting Disabilities

Residence Life and Housing personnel will make a reasonable effort to notify residents in the residence building where the animal will be located of the existence of a service or emotional support animal in the building.

Students with medical condition(s) that are affected by animals (respiratory diseases, asthma, severe allergies) are asked to contact the Office of Residence Life and Housing if they have a health or safety related concern about exposure to the service or emotional support animal. The individual will be asked to provide medical documentation that identifies the condition(s) to

assist in determining whether the condition is disabling and whether there is a need for an accommodation. The Director of Residence Life and Housing will resolve any conflict in a timely manner. Staff members will consider the conflicting needs and/or accommodations of all persons involved. In the event that an agreement cannot be reached, the Office of Disability Services' decision is final and not subject to appeal.

Resident Responsibilities

Care and Supervision: Care and supervision of the animal is the sole responsibility of the individual who benefits from the animal's use. The person is required to maintain control of the animal at all times. The person is also responsible for ensuring the clean-up of the animal's waste and the general cleanliness of the animal. Caged animals are to be kept in appropriate cages with flooring and liner to prevent any damage to floors and to allow sanitary removal of pet waste.

Noise and Behavior: The animal shall not disturb or cause any nuisance to other members of the community. This generally includes no barking, whining, squawking, scratching, chewing, or aggression. Residents are responsible for any odors, noise, damage, or other conduct of their animal that disturbs others or damages the premises. Residents that violate this policy or these obligations may be required to remove the animal from the residence hall room.

Damage: Owners of service or emotional support animals are solely responsible for any damage to persons or college property caused by their animal. The resident will be required to pay for any damage and/or excessive cleaning fees caused by the animal.

Vaccination: In accordance with local ordinances and regulations, the animal must be immunized against diseases common to that type of animal. Dogs must have current vaccinations against rabies and wear a rabies vaccination tag. The resident must provide verification of all veterinarian recommended vaccinations as well as proof of absence of communicable diseases, fleas and parasites (annually or as needed, thereafter). Copies of the vaccination record and city license must be provided.

Licensing: The person keeping a service or emotional support animal on campus must ensure compliance with any laws pertaining to animal licensing or other similar laws.

Health: Animals to be housed in campus housing must have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian. Documentation can be a vaccination certificate for the animal or a veterinarian's statement regarding the animal's health. The college has the authority to direct that the animal receive veterinary attention.

Training: Service or emotional support animals must be properly trained. You must provide verification that the animal has been individually trained as a service or emotional support animal to provide the service(s) needed. Acceptable verifications are 1) the letter or ID card provided by agency personnel who trained the animal or 2) a statement from the owner that the animal was trained by the owner or another private individual.

Transport of Animal: The animal must be under the control of the resident, such as on a leash or in a carrier, when being transported to and from the residence hall.

Emergency Care:

The resident must provide the Director of Residence Life and Housing with contact information for an off-campus alternate caregiver if the resident is unable or unwilling to provide adequate care. The College will assume no responsibility/liability for the care of a resident's emotional support animal.

Other Conditions: Columbia College may place other reasonable conditions or restrictions on the animals depending on the nature and characteristics of the animal. If the animal becomes disruptive to the roommates and/or suitemates the College may require or the student may request a room with no roommates.

Access

The University may prohibit the use of service animals in certain locations due to health and safety restrictions (e.g. where the animals may be in danger, or where their use may compromise the integrity of research). Restricted areas may include, but are not limited to, the following areas: custodial closets, boiler rooms, facility equipment rooms, research laboratories, classrooms with research/demonstration animals, areas where protective clothing is necessary, wood and metal shops, motor pools, and rooms with heavy machinery.

The student's residence hall room is the only college owned building and space where the Emotional Support Animal is permitted.

Exceptions to restricted areas may be granted on a case-by-case basis by contacting the Office of Disability Services; however, the staff person directing the restricted area will be allowed to make the final decision.

Removal of the Animal

The college may exclude/remove an Emotional Support Animal or Service Animal when it 1) poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others; 2) results in a fundamental alteration of the College's program; or 3) engages in disruptive behavior.

Requirements for Faculty, Staff, Students, and Other Members of the College Community

Members of the College community are required to abide by the following practices:

- A. They are not to touch or pet an Emotional Support Animal unless invited to do so.
- B. They are not to feed the Emotional Support Animal.
- C. They are not to deliberately startle the Emotional Support Animal.
- D. They are not to separate or to attempt to separate an owner from their Emotional Support Animal.
- E. They are not to inquire for details about the owner's disabilities. The nature of a person's disability is a private matter.

Questions

Questions or concerns related to this policy should be addressed to the Office of Disability Services:

Office of Disability Services
1301 Columbia College Drive
Columbia, SC 29203
Phone: (803)786-3727

If there is a concern of immediate danger or an emergency related to a service or emotional support animal when the Office of Disability Services is closed, contact the Columbia College Police Department.

Revised: 7/28/16