

Purpose

The University seeks to accommodate persons with disabilities who need assistance of service animals. These procedures provide guidance on the rules and regulations for all students, faculty, staff and visitors.

Authority, Responsibility, and Duties

These procedures govern the process for bringing a service animal on University property (all areas owned or controlled by the University, or being used for a University-related event). A determination will be made on a case-by-case basis. The authority to interpret this policy rests with the President, and is generally delegated to the Associate Vice President for Human Resources.

Definitions

“Disability” means an individual who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of his or her major life activities.

“Handler” means a person with a disability who is the owner and user of a service animal.

“Service Animal” is any animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of and to accommodate the functional needs of an individual with a disability.

Policy Statements

Virginia State University is committed to providing equal access in education and employment to its students, employees and applicants for employment. Persons with disabilities have the same right as able-bodied individuals to the use and enjoyment of programs, activities and services offered at the University. We will strive to make reasonable accommodations for a disabled person’s use of a service animal on University property on a case-by-case basis considering each individual’s limitations and accommodation needs.

A service animal will be allowed to accompany their owner/handler consistent with federal regulations and the University guideline procedures. The service animal will be permitted to accompany the handler to all authorized areas of the University where students, employees, and visitors are allowed unless prohibited for safety and/or health reasons.

Guideline Procedures

- I. A request for accommodation relating to the use of a service animal requires sufficient notice and lead time for coordination, consideration and decision-making. A request may be initiated in the following manner:**
 - An **employee** may request a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability from his/her supervisor; another supervisor or manager in his/her immediate chain of command or the Office of Human Resources.

- A **student** may request a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability from the Office of Students with Disabilities.
- An **applicant** may request a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability from any member of the Human Resources staff with whom the applicant has contact in connection with the application process.
- A **visitor** may initiate a request for reasonable accommodation for a documented disability with the appropriate school/department that is sponsoring the program, activity or service of interest.
- A **family member, health professional, or other representative** may request an accommodation for a documented disability on behalf of a University employee, student or applicant to the Office of Students with Disabilities when the intended benefactor is a student. All other requests should be directed to the Office of Human Resources.

II. Responsibilities of students, faculty, staff, and, when applicable, visitors of the University who use or intend to use service animals:

- A. An employee, student, affiliate, volunteer or contractor who is a service animal handler is responsible for obtaining approval and registering the service animal with the Department of Human Resources.
- B. Provide acceptable documentation of the need for the service animal.
- C. Service animals must be leashed while on University property unless performing training services for the handler. The service animal must be under the control of its handler.
- D. The service animal must wear appropriate identification as indication of ownership.
- E. Provide documentation showing proof of vaccination. All animals must have current vaccinations. Dog vaccinations include rabies, distemper and parvovirus. All dogs must wear their rabies vaccination tags.
- F. Handlers are responsible for the cleaning and caring of their service animal as well as removing animal waste.

III. Factors that may be considered in accommodation [access] decision-making will consist of whether the service animal:

- A. Is clean, well-groomed and does not have an offensive odor.
- B. Is in good health, free from parasites, and has received all recommended vaccinations; has a current veterinary certificate or attestation.
- C. Does not urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations.
- D. Does not solicit attention, visit or annoy any student or University personnel.
- E. Does not vocalize unnecessarily; i.e., barking, growling, or whining.
- F. Shows no aggression towards people or other animals.
- G. Does not solicit or steal food or other items from students or University personnel.
- H. Must not interfere with the educational program or resident life of any student.

IV. Service Animals in Student Housing/Residence Halls

- A. The service animal qualifies as a reasonable accommodation that is necessary to afford the individual equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling or to participate in the housing service or program.
- B. There is [must be] a relationship, or nexus, between the individual's disability and the assistance the service animal provides.
- C. The service animal does not pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others.
- D. Students must complete process prior to move-in.
- E. Students are responsible for any damages caused by the service animal.
- F. Students are responsible for keeping their service animal clean and groomed and removing animal waste.

V. Removal of Service Animals

- A. Service animals can be removed from University grounds due to failure to comply with these guideline procedures.
- B. A service animal can be removed from University grounds if its behavior is disruptive. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to: barking, running without a leash and aggressive conduct or behavior.

Informal Dispute Resolution

Individuals with disabilities may request reconsideration of a denial of reasonable accommodation to the decision maker(s). The individual may present additional information in support of his/her request. The decision maker(s) will respond to the appeal within 10 business days.

Pursuing the informal dispute resolution procedures identified above, including appealing to the next person in the decision maker(s)' chain of command, does not affect the time limits for initiating statutory claims. An individual's participation in any informal dispute resolution process does not satisfy the requirements for bringing a claim via other means (i.e. Office of Human Resources, State or Federal EEO Offices).

Policy Violations

Any employee or student who engages in conduct determined to be discrimination on the basis of disability or who encourages such conduct by others, will be subject to corrective action which may include suspension and/or discharge.

Obligations and Responsibilities:

All employees and students are responsible for conducting themselves in a manner consistent with this policy. Anyone who believes they have been subjected to or observed instances of unlawful disability discrimination should contact the Office of Human Resources.

Upon notification of a discrimination complaint, the University shall take prompt and appropriate action in response to the charge presented by the complainant. Any employee of the University being advised of a complaint of discrimination shall immediately refer the matter to the Human Resource Manager for EEO. All complaints under the policy should be filed within *30 days from the date of the alleged discrimination.

**The University reserves the right to accept and review complaints that are filed later than 30 days from the date of the alleged discriminatory act if, upon preliminary review by the Human Resource Manager for EEO, the President, or his designee determines that there is just cause for the delay in reporting the matter, or that it is in the best interest of the University to review the matter.*

Approval By: _____


President

Date: _____

10/17/11