

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	STUDENT SERVICES SERVICE ANIMALS	Procedure 6.04.08.01
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I. OVERVIEW

The college is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for all students, in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other applicable federal and state law. The College accommodates otherwise qualified individuals with a documented disability by making a reasonable modification in its services, programs, or activities.

Procedures for accommodating students through the use of Service Animals or Emotional Support Animals during instructions are covered in Procedure 6.04.08.01

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Emotional Support Animal** – an animal selected or prescribed to an individual with a disability by a healthcare or mental health professional to play a significant part in a person's treatment process (e.g., in alleviating the symptoms of that individual's disability). An emotional support animal does not assist a person with a disability with activities of daily living and does not accompany a person with a disability at all times. An emotional support animal is not a "Service Animal".
- B. **Service Animal** – an animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual 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 handler's disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing nonviolent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. Service Animals may or may not have been licensed by a state or local government or a private agency. Service Animals are limited to service dogs and, in some cases, miniature horses.
- C. **Pets** – any animal that is not an Emotional Support Animal or a Service Animal.

III. ANIMALS ON CAMPUS

Pets are not permitted on campus and may not be left in vehicles on College property. There are occasions when a student or employee may need to bring an animal onto campus for the purpose of meeting an educational objective. Such requests should be

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made to the appropriate academic Dean prior to the animal being allowed onto campus. Subject to the rules set forth in section IV and V below, Emotional Support Animals and Service Animals are permitted in any area of campus where employees or students are permitted, with a few exceptions for health and safety reasons (i.e., areas that must adhere to certain required sanitation rules such as campus culinary and health sciences programs and third-party clinical partners).

IV. PROCEDURES REGARDING SERVICE/EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

A. Responsibilities of the Service/Emotional Support Animal Owner/Handler

1. Registration

a. Service Animals

Students and employees are not required to register Service Animals. However, they are strongly encouraged to notify the Disability Services Office (students) or the Office of Human Resources (employees) if they intend to use a Service Animal on campus so that appropriate College officials are aware of the animal's presence and to assist with the Service Animal's access to areas within the College's campus. Logistical or physical accommodations within campus buildings or classrooms may be necessary to ensure that a Service Animal has the space necessary to assist its handler. In addition, there are other disability related academic accommodations a student handler may be eligible to request to ensure full access to the learning experience. Visitors with Services Animals are not required to register their animals.

b. Emotional Support Animals

After the College has made a determination that an Emotional Support Animal is allowed on campus (see Section B.2), the student or employee must register the animal with the Disability Services Office (students) or the Office of Human Resources (employees).

2. Care and Supervision

- a. The care and supervision of a Service/Emotional Support Animal is the responsibility of the animal's owner and/or handler. The handler must ensure the animal is in good health and has been inoculated and licensed in accordance with local regulations with the burden of proving licensure and inoculation on the person with a disability. Dogs must wear a rabies tag at all times.

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- b. The Service/Emotional Support Animal must be under the control of the handler at all times and may not be left alone. A Service/Emotional Animal must be restrained by a leash that does not exceed six (6) feet in length or other appropriate device dependent on the animal (i.e., carriers or cages). In situations where a leash or other appropriate device interferes with a Service Animals ability to perform its task or service, the Service Animal must remain under the control of the handler at all times.
- c. The owner and handler of the Service/Emotional Support Animal is responsible for any damage of personal or college property or any injuries to an individual caused by the Service/Emotional Support Animal.
- d. The handler must ensure the animal is “housebroken” and trained. The handler must clean up and remove all animal waste created by the animal both inside campus buildings and outdoor campus property.
- e. The Service/Emotional Support Animal may not disrupt the operation of the College or any class. Disruptions include but are not limited to: barking, growling, pacing/constant motion, foul odor, pawing and or sniffing of others. It is the assumption of the college that all Service/Emotional Support Animals on campus are “working” animals and therefore, should not be treated as a pet. There should be no petting by others and no handling by others.

B. Responsibilities of the College Community

1. Service Animals

If the need for a Service Animal is obvious, College officials may not question the presence of the animal on campus. If the need for a Service Animal is not obvious, College officials are permitted to ask the handler two questions:

- a. Is the animal required because of a disability?
- b. What work or task(s) has the animal been individually trained to perform?

At no time may a College official require a Service Animal to demonstrate the tasks for which they have been trained nor may they inquire as to the nature of the individual’s disability.

If another person on campus has a covered disability under the ADA and it includes an allergic reaction to animals and that person has contact with a

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Service Animal, a request for accommodation should be made by the individual to the Director of Human Resources (if an employee) or the Disability Services Office (if a student). All facts surrounding the concern will be considered in an effort to resolve the concern and provide reasonable accommodation for both individuals.

2. Emotional Support Animals

The determination of whether a student or employee with a disability is allowed to have an Emotional Support Animal on campus shall be made on a case-by-case basis. Students and employees may request, as a reasonable accommodation for a disability, the need to have an Emotional Support Animal on campus. The College is not required to grant reasonable accommodations that would result in a fundamental alteration of a program, create an unsafe environment or would constitute an undue burden. Any requests for a reasonable accommodation for an Emotional Support Animal shall be directed to the Disability Service Office (students) or the Office of Human Resources (employees).

In determining request for accommodations for an Emotional Support Animal, the consideration is: 1) does the person have a disability (i.e., a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities); 2) does the Emotional Support Animal perform tasks or services for the benefit of the person or provide emotional support that alleviates one of more of the identified symptoms for effects of the person's existing disability; and 3) is the request an undue burden on the College, does the request create an unsafe environment, or does it fundamentally alter a College program.

C. Removal of Service/Emotional Support Animals

The College has the authority to remove a Service/Emotional Support Animal from its facilities or properties if the Service/Emotional Support Animal becomes unruly or disruptive, unclean and/or unhealthy, and to the extent that the animal's behavior or condition poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others or otherwise causes a fundamental alteration in the College's services, programs, or activities. All cases for removal shall be decided on a case-by-case basis based on that specific situation. In appropriate situations, the College will use a progressive model beginning with a warning for a first offense and removal (either temporarily or permanently) for additional offenses. However, dependent on the severity of the situation, the first offense could result in a temporary or permanent removal.

It is a Class 3 misdemeanor "to disguise an animal as a service animal or service animal in training". N.C.G.S. § 168-4.5. In other words, it is a crime under North Carolina law to attempt to obtain access for an animal under the false pretense

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that it is a Service Animal.

Additionally, any employee or student who violates any portion of this procedure is subject to disciplinary action.

Legal Reference: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
 Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
 N.C.G.S. § 168-4.5

Adopted: July 28, 2015

Revised: November 27, 2018 (replaced), Procedure Adopted September 23, 2025