UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance

Service and Emotional Support Animals Policy

I. Purpose
II. Definitions
III. Policy Statement on Service Animals
  A. UCF's Inquiries Regarding Service Animals
  B. Requirements of Service Animals and their Handlers
  C. Campus Access for Service Animals
  D. Conflicting Disabilities and Accommodations
  E. Emergency Response Situations
IV. Policy Statement on Service or Emotional Support Animals as an Employment Accommodation for Employees
V. Policy Statement on Emotional Support Animals in University Housing
VI. Questions

I. Purpose

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and Fair Housing Act (FHA), the University of Central Florida is committed to reasonably accommodating qualified students and individuals with disabilities. This policy explains the difference between Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals and sets out the rules for each. Individuals who seek to bring a Service Animal to public areas on campus do not need prior permission and may be asked only for limited information (see section III(A) below) but are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) office or the Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance (ONAC) so that the university knows why the animal is on campus and so that it can ensure that the Handler understands Service Animal policies (see section III below).

Students who wish to bring a Service Animal into their student housing should inform Housing and Residence Life prior to bringing the animal into housing for safety and health reasons (see section III(B) below).

Students who wish to bring Emotional Support Animals into student housing must have prior permission from Student Accessibility Services (see section V below). Students may not bring Emotional Support Animals to class or into other University buildings.

Employees who wish to bring either a Service Animal or an Emotional Support Animal into their non-public workspaces must have prior approval through the reasonable accommodation process (see section IV below).

II. Definitions

Individual with a Disability:
Under the ADA, Section 504, and the FHA, an individual with a disability is one who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment. However, an individual must actually have a disability in order to obtain an accommodation.

Handler/Team:
An individual with a disability using a Service or Emotional Support Animal as an accommodation. A Handler and their Service Animal are called a Team. The two work as a cohesive unit in accomplishing the tasks of everyday living.

Service Animal:
Any dog 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 and otherwise meets the definition of "Service Animal" under the ADA. The work or tasks performed must be directly related to the individual's disability.

Examples of such work or tasks include, but are not limited to, guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting an individual who is having a seizure, reminding an individual with mental illness to take prescribed medications, or sensing an on-coming anxiety attack and taking a specific action to help avoid the attack or lessen its impact. Service Animals are working animals, NOT pets. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as Service Animals.

Emotional Support Animal:
An animal that an individual with a disability utilizes solely for emotional support, well-being, or comfort. Emotional Support Animals do not qualify as "Service Animals" because these animals are not individually trained to perform work or tasks. However, Emotional Support Animals that are not Service Animals may still be permitted, in certain circumstances, in University Housing pursuant to the Fair Housing Act or may be a reasonable accommodation for employees under the ADA. Students with Emotional Support Animals are not permitted to bring those animals on campus in University buildings other than University Housing and only in Housing once approved by Student Accessibility Services (see more in the Housing Accommodation Guide). Students seeking access and accommodation options in lieu of Emotional Support Animals in non-Housing spaces should contact Student Accessibility Services to explore whether or not other possible accessible options might exist.

Service Animal in Training:
A dog in the control of a trainer and in the act of being individually trained to perform as a Service Animal. Any trainer of a service animal, while engaged in the training of such an animal, has the same rights, privileges and obligations as the Handler of a service animal with respect to access to public facilities as long as the animal is wearing a leash, harness or cape that identifies it as a Service Animal in Training. If an individual is seeking to bring a Service Animal in Training into the workplace, please see section IV below.

Pet:
A domestic animal kept for pleasure or companionship. Pets are generally not permitted in any University-controlled buildings. While on University-controlled property, pets must be attended and restrained at all times.

III. Policy Statement on Service Animals as Public Accommodations

In compliance with applicable law, UCF generally allows Service Animals in areas of public accommodation including its buildings, classrooms, residence halls, meeting areas, dining areas, recreational facilities, activities and events when the animal is accompanied by an individual with a disability who indicates the Service Animal is trained to provide, and does provide, a specific service to them that is necessary because of the individual's disability.

Under limited circumstances, UCF may ask for removal of the Service Animal from University property. Such circumstances include, but are not limited to:

- If a Service Animal is found by the University to be out of control and the animal's Handler does not take immediate and effective action to control the animal.
- If the Service Animal is not housebroken.
- If a Service Animal is physically ill.
- If the Service Animal is unreasonably dirty.
- If a Service Animal attempts to enter a place on campus where the presence of a Service Animal causes danger to the safety of the Handler or other students/member of campus.
- If a Service Animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others, or could be, in danger.

UCF will make such determinations on a case-by-case basis. However, where a Service Animal is properly removed pursuant to this policy, UCF will work with the Handler to determine reasonable alternative opportunities to participate in the service, program, or activity without having the Service Animal on the premises.

A. UCF's Inquiries Regarding Service Animals

In general, when an individual is using a Service Animal, UCF will not ask about the nature or extent of an individual's disability but may make two inquiries to determine whether an animal qualifies as a Service Animal. When it is not obvious or apparent what disability-related service an animal provides, UCF may ask: (1) if the animal is a Service Animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task the animal has been trained to perform.

UCF cannot ask for details about the individual's disability, require medical documentation, or require proof that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a Service Animal.

Specific questions related to the use of Service Animals on the UCF campus by visitors may be directed to the ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, Kristeena LaRoue, via e-mail, Kristeena.LaRoue@ucf.edu, or phone, (407) 823-1336.

B. Requirements of Service Animals and Their Handlers

Individuals who wish to bring a Service Animal to campus are strongly encouraged to partner with SAS or ONAC, especially if other reasonable accommodations are required. Additionally, individuals who plan to live in on-campus housing should inform Housing and Residence Life that they plan to have a Service Animal with them in student housing as soon as possible. Advance notice of a Service Animal for on-campus housing may allow more flexibility in meeting a student's specific requests for housing. Staff and faculty with Service Animals are strongly encouraged to contact the ONAC.

Handlers are responsible for any property damage or injuries caused by their animals and must take appropriate precautions to prevent property damage or injury to other humans or to the Service Animal. The cost of care, arrangements, and responsibilities for the well-being of a Service Animal are the sole responsibility of the Handler at all times. The University is not obligated to supervise or otherwise care for a Service Animal.

Service Animal Control/Management Requirements:

- The animal should be on a leash when not providing a needed service to the Handler.
- The Handler must be in full control of the Service Animal at all times. The care and supervision of a Service Animal is solely the responsibility of its Handler.
- To the extent possible, the animal should be unobtrusive to other individuals and the learning, living, and working environment.
- The Service Animal should (but is not required to) wear a harness, identification tag, or other gear that readily identifies its working status.
- The Service Animal must be in good health. The Service Animal must have current vaccinations and immunizations against diseases common to that type of animal. All Service Animals must wear a current rabies vaccination tag. Animals living in campus housing must have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian.

Animal Etiquette:

To the extent possible, the Handler should ensure that the animal does not:

- Sniff people, restaurant tables, or the personal belongings of others (uninvited).
- Display any behaviors or noises that are disruptive to others unless part of the service being provided the Handler.
- Block an aisle or passageway for fire and/or emergency egress.

Handlers may request that others avoid:

- Petting or addressing their Service Animal as it may distract it from the task at hand.
- Feeding the Service Animal.
- Deliberately startling the Service Animal and separating or attempting to separate the Handler from their Service Animal.

Waste Cleanup Rule:

It is the responsibility of the Handler to arrange any cleaning necessary due to the presence of the Service Animal. Feces must be cleaned immediately and disposed of properly. This includes University common areas and exterior property such as courtyards, walkways, etc.

C. Campus Access for Service Animals

The University community must allow Service Animals to accompany individuals with disabilities at all times and in all public areas, including classrooms, residence halls, meeting areas, dining areas, and recreational facilities except as follows. Service Animals may not be permitted in places where there is a health, environmental, or safety hazard, or where the Service Animal's presence fundamentally alters the nature of a University service or program. The following examples are areas of the University campus where access may be restricted:

Research Laboratories:
Chemicals found in many labs can be harmful to Service Animals. Organisms naturally found on most dogs or other animals could negatively impact the outcome of research.

Mechanical Rooms/Custodial Closets:
Such locations can have chemicals or machinery that could potentially harm a Service Animal, and Service Animals may cause disruption to services provided in the location.

Medical Centers:
Except in emergency visits, individuals with a Service Animal must notify and coordinate with medical personnel staff in advance of the presence of a Service Animal to ensure that patient safety is not compromised, as well as the need to minimize the risk of exposing the Service Animal to infections and disease.

Other Potentially Dangerous Areas:
Any room, studio or classroom with sharp metal cuttings or glass shards on the floor; hot material such as molten metal; excessive dust; or moving machinery may pose a danger to Service Animals.

When students with Service Animals must be in one of these restricted areas for a course requirement, alternative arrangements will be considered to provide access. When it is determined unsafe for the Team to be in one of these areas, reasonable accommodations will be provided to assure the student equal access to the academic program or activity.

D. Conflicting Disabilities

Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for excluding a Service or Emotional Support Animal from the entire campus. However, it is possible that individuals at the University may have a disability that precipitates an allergic reaction to animals. Such individuals who expect to come into contact with the animal regularly, and who experience reactions to the animal due to their disability, should contact the ONAC (students, faculty, and staff) or Housing and Residence Life (student housing). The individual making the complaint must provide verifiable medical documentation to support his or her claim. Action will be taken to consider the needs of both individuals to resolve the problem as efficiently and effectively as possible.

If there is an allergy/animal conflict within a residence hall that cannot be resolved agreeably, then the ONAC and Housing and Residence Life will collaborate on a solution, taking into consideration the needs of both students.

E. Emergency Situations

Emergency responders should be trained to recognize Service Animals and make every reasonable effort to keep the animal with their Handler in the event of an emergency evacuation.

IV. Policy Statement on Service or Emotional Support Animals as an Employment Accommodation for Employees

Bringing animals to work may be a reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities in order to: (1) assist the employee with performing the essential job functions of the employee's job, or (2) provide equal benefits or privileges of employment.

The employee must have prior approval documented by the employee's office or the ONAC before bringing an animal to work. The University will treat a request to bring a Service Animal to work as it would a request for any other accommodation.

The University has a right to request documentation or demonstration of: (1) the need for the animal if the need is not obvious, (2) that the animal is trained, or is otherwise qualified to provide the assistance required of the disability, and (3) that the animal will not disrupt the workplace. The University may deny an accommodation request if it poses an undue burden, including situations in which the animal may be in danger in the workplace environment.

If the animal is permitted at work as a reasonable accommodation, all rules regarding the care and conduct of the animal described in Section III above apply. The employee is solely responsible for any damage or injury caused by the animal. The University has no duty to supervise or provide other care for the animal, but the University may be required to provide accommodations that enable employees to take breaks or leave required to care for the animal.

V. Policy Statement on Emotional Support Animals in University Housing

Under the Fair Housing Act, "an individual with a disability may have the right to have an animal other than a dog in his or her home (University residence hall) if the animal qualifies as a 'reasonable accommodation' that is necessary to afford the individual equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling, assuming that the animal does not pose a direct threat." Accordingly, UCF will allow an Emotional Support Animal in an individual's University residence if certain conditions are met. Emotional Support Animals are not allowed to accompany individuals with disabilities in all areas of UCF. Specifically, students with Emotional Support Animals are not permitted to bring those animals on campus in places other than University Housing and only in Housing once approved by Student Accessibility Services (see more in the Housing Accommodation Guide). Students seeking access and accommodation options in lieu of Emotional Support Animals in non-Housing spaces should contact Student Accessibility Services to explore whether or not other possible accessible options might exist.

Before an Emotional Support Animal may be permitted to reside in campus housing, a request must be submitted to Student Accessibility Services and approval must be granted. Requests must include documentation from a licensed physician or mental health provider and must provide

sufficient information for the University to determine: that because of the resident's disability, the animal is necessary for the resident to have equal access to housing and the accommodation, and that such accommodation is reasonable. An accommodation is unreasonable if it presents an undue financial or administrative burden on the University, poses a substantial and direct threat to personal or public safety, or the health or safety of the animal, or constitutes a fundamental alteration of the nature of the service or program. For more information about Emotional Support Animals in housing, please visit the Housing Accommodation Guide.

Any approved Emotional Support Animal in UCF housing facilities must also meet the above-mentioned requirements/policies for Service Animal health and behavior as well as their University Housing agreement.

VI. Therapy Animals

Therapy animals serve as part of animal-assisted interventions, which are goal-oriented and structured interventions in health, education, and/or human service for the purpose of therapeutic gains and improved health and wellness. These animals' responsibility is to provide psychological or physiological therapy to individuals other than their handlers. They are not service animals or emotional support animals, and have no special rights of access. Currently, UCF has two departments that are approved to have registered therapy animals on university property – specifically, UCF's Police Department and UCF's Counseling and Psychological Services. To obtain permission to have a therapy animal(s) on university property, individuals must request approval from the director of UCF's Enterprise Risk Management.

VII. Questions

Any questions or concerns related to a Service Animal or an Emotional Support Animal should be addressed to the UCF Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance:

12701 Scholarship Drive
Suite 101
University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida 32816-0030
Email: onac@ucf.edu
Phone: (407) 823-1336

Alternatively, information may also be obtained by contacting the ADA Coordinator, Kristeena LaRoue at (407) 823-1336, or Kristeena.LaRoue@ucf.edu.

Edited 8/16; 6/17; 12/18; 12/19; 12/22; 4/25; 10/26