



**Office of Access and Accommodations**  
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## Policy Regarding Service and Emotional Support Animals

Fort Valley State University (“FVSU”) is committed to maintaining a fair and respectful environment for students on campus with disabilities. To that end and in compliance with federal and state laws, this policy (“Policy”) provides general guidelines and permitted uses of animals assisting individuals with disabilities while on FVSU property.

### DEFINITIONS:

**Disability:** A documented physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or a record of such an impairment.

**Service Animal:** Any dog 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 owner’s disability. Examples of such 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 non-violent 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. The provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition.

**Emotional Support Animal (“ESA”):** Any animal providing emotional support, well-being, or comfort that eases one or more identified symptoms or effects of a documented disability. Emotional support animals may also be referred to as a comfort or therapy animals. Emotional support animals are not individually trained to perform specific work or tasks. Pets (as defined below) are not considered ESAs.

**Owner:** A student with a disability who is requesting and possessing an emotional support animal.

**Pet:** Any animal kept for ordinary use and companionship that does not meet the definition of an ESA.

## PROCESS:

**Service Animals:** Students who require the use of Service Animals that have been trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities may bring them on campus without making a formal request for reasonable accommodation. Service animals are permitted in FVSU facilities and campus areas, including housing, except where prohibited due to environmental or safety hazards or areas where there is a danger to the animal. However, it is requested that all students who will reside with a service animal in campus housing meet with the Office of Access and Accommodations (“OAA”) to review the Animal Policy and its requirements and acknowledge receipt and understanding of the Policy.

**Emotional Support Animals:** Students who wish to have ESAs in their residence hall units must register the animal with the OAA annually. The student must provide medical documentation from a licensed physician, mental health provider, or other mental health professional who can attest:

(1) that the individual qualifies as a person with a disability and specifically identify the diagnosis and functional limitation(s),

(2) that the ESA is necessary to provide the person with a disability an equal opportunity to enjoy the use of the residence hall,

(3) that there is an identifiable and documented connection between the disability and the assistance that the animal provides by describing how the use of the ESA in the residence hall is necessary or required to mitigate the impact of the functional limitation(s), and

(4) that the documenting licensed physician, mental health provider, or other mental health professional has a documented history of treating the student for the underlying disability.

The Office of Access and Accommodations shall maintain appropriate records on registered animals and provide Residential Life with the identities of the students and their approved ESAs when their registration requirements with OAA have been completed. Required documents include the accommodations request form, letter of support from a licensed mental health provider, current vaccination records for the ESA, and signed roommate agreement.

## CAMPUS ACCESS:

### SERVICE ANIMAL ACCESS:

Service Animals must be allowed to accompany Owners in all areas of FVSU.

When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Faculty and staff may ask two questions: (1) is the Service Animal required because of a disability? and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform? Employees cannot ask about the person’s disability, require medical documentation, require special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

### EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL ACCESS:

ESAs are not allowed to accompany persons with disabilities in public areas of FVSU. ESAs are allowed in a student’s assigned residential hall unit after approval has been received from the Office of Access and Accommodations (“OAA”) and said approval is provided to Residential Life.

ESAs are restricted to the registered student’s unit and only allowed outside the unit to care for the animal outside of the building or to transport the animal. ESAs are not otherwise permitted inside other University

facilities. ESAs of visitors or students not residing in the University Housing facility being visited are not permitted in any University facility.

PET ACCESS:

Pets are not allowed in any FVSU facility.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENT ESA OWNERS:

(1) All are required to always keep their animals under their direct physical control when outside of their assigned residence unit as permitted by this Policy. An Owner must always maintain close and direct physical control of the animal by means of an appropriate leash that enables the Owner to maintain close and direct physical control of the animal. If an Owner is unable to use these restraints because of his or her disability or because use would interfere with the safe and effective performance of work or tasks, then the animal must otherwise be under the Owner's control by voice control, signals, or other effective means. An example of an ESA that is out of control would be an animal that repeatedly gets loose and runs at large, even if it does not physically injure another person or ESA.

(2) All are prohibited from transferring control to another person even momentarily, requesting the assistance of other persons in supervising or controlling their animals. At no time should the ESA become the responsibility of a roommate, FVSU staff person, or other residence hall students. Owners are responsible for ensuring that the animal is contained appropriately and receives the proper care.

(3) All must ensure that their animals are kept clean and well-groomed and kept in a healthy clean environment.

(4) Owners must ensure that their animals are housebroken. In the event of an isolated incident of an animal failing to control its bodily eliminations due to illness or accident, the Owner is responsible for immediately and properly cleaning up and disposing of any bodily fluids or solid waste from the animal whether indoors or outdoors. Student ESA owners are similarly responsible for clean-up and removal of animal waste. All are responsible for maintaining their animals in a sanitary and clean manner in the residence halls.

(5) Service animal and ESA owners shall be liable for any and all resulting costs when an animal causes damage to FVSU facilities or property or injury to persons. In all cases of damage to FVSU facilities or property by an animal failing to control its bodily eliminations due to illness, accident, or otherwise, the owner is personally responsible for the cost of additional cleaning of or repairs to FVSU facilities or the cleaning, repair, or replacement of damaged property. In the case of any incident involving injury to a person by an animal, the owner shall make an immediate report to the FVSU Campus Police Department so that the incident can be properly investigated and documented. The owner shall also fully comply with any state or local law or regulation requiring additional reports to other government agencies that may be required due to the physical injury caused by the animal.

(6) All approved animals must be in compliance with state and local laws regarding health, vaccination, and care of the animal.

## GROUND FOR REMOVAL OF ANIMALS FROM FVSU FACILITIES:

OUT OF CONTROL ANIMAL: Owners will be asked to remove any animal if it is out of control and the owner does not take effective and immediate action to control it. If the out-of-control behavior happens

repeatedly, the owner may be prohibited from bringing the animal into university facilities until the owner can demonstrate that significant steps have been taken to correct and control the behavior.

NON-HOUSEBROKEN/UNSANITARY ANIMAL: An owner may be directed to remove an animal that is not housebroken or if the animal's environment is not maintained in a healthy, sanitary environment or the animal is not kept clean and well-groomed.

DIRECT THREAT: An animal that poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others is not permitted on campus. An example would be an animal that exhibits aggression or has injured another person or animal.

IMPROPER/INADEQUATE CARE: Failure to properly care for an animal will result in the animal being removed from FVSU property. Any evidence of mistreatment, abuse, neglect, or leaving the ESA unattended for unreasonably long periods of time may result in immediate removal of the ESA and/or discipline for the Owner pursuant to the University Student Code of Conduct.

Students who require the use of a support animal will receive this policy and are expected to read and agree to abide by the document. Failure to meet the requirements of the animal policy may result in removal of the animal.

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