



TRUETT MCCONNELL UNIVERSITY

Service and Emotional Support Animal Policy

Introduction

Truett McConnell University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who require the assistance of Service or Emotional Support Animals. The University is also mindful of health and safety concerns of the campus community. Therefore, the University must balance the needs of the individual along with the impact on the entire campus. Successful implementation requires cooperation from students, faculty and staff.

The Offices of Special Support Services and Student Development will work together to ensure a student's housing needs are met. Students who wish to bring a service or emotional support animal to campus are required to first provide proper documentation to the Office of Special Support Services which includes completing a Disclosure of Disability Form.

Determination of reasonable accommodations are made on an individual basis. For additional information on accommodations or to apply for an accommodation, please contact the Office of Special Support Services at (706) 878-0787 or email Ms. Nell Hoyle, Director of Special Support Services, at nhoyle@truett.edu.

After the Office of Special Support Services has approved the accommodation of a service or emotional support animal, the student is responsible for requesting a meeting with the Director of Student Development. No animal may enter a housing facility until written approval has been granted. The University's Residential Director, Mr. Jonathan Morris, may be contacted at jmorris@truett.edu.

In addition, the resident must provide written notification to the Director of Special Support Services and Student Development if the service animal is no longer needed as a service animal or the animal is no longer in the residence. To replace a service animal with a new service animal, the resident must file a new request with the Office of Special Support Services and follow the same procedures as before.

Definitions

Disability:

A disability is any physical, mental, or medical condition or impairment that limits one or more of a person's major life activities or is demonstrated by medically accepted clinical diagnostic techniques. These limitations include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, or learning.

Service Animal:

A Service Animal is any animal trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. The tasks a service animal provides includes, but are not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, providing minimal (non-violent) protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, or fetching dropped items.

Emotional Support Animal (ESA):

An Emotional Support or Comfort Animal is not a pet. An Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is one that can be kept in a residence as prescribed for a person with a disability as a reasonable accommodation to provide him/her an equal opportunity to use and enjoy campus housing. Such requirement must be documented by a medical and/or a mental health professional (Doctorate Level) as needed due to one or more identified symptoms or effects of the person's disability. Typically, an Emotional Support Animal is prescribed to an individual with a disability by a licensed physician or psychologist (Doctorate) with training in the area of the person's disability and is an integral part of a person's treatment process.

Pet:

A pet is any animal kept for ordinary use and companionship unrelated to a disability. A pet is not considered either a Service or Emotional Support Animal, and therefore, is not covered by this policy. Students, faculty, and staff are not allowed to have pets on University property.

Service and Emotional Support Animals in Housing

Service Animals:

If it is readily apparent that an individual has a disability and that the animal is a Service Animal, no further information will be requested. If it is not readily apparent, a request should be submitted to the Office of Support Services as quickly as possible. An individual may be asked if the animal is a Service Animal and what task(s) the animal is trained to perform. The animal will not be required to demonstrate the task(s) it is trained to perform and no documentation of training will be required.

Emotional Support Animals:

Under the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and Section 504, individuals with a disability may be entitled to keep an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) as a reasonable accommodation in campus housing facilities that otherwise impose restrictions or have prohibitions on non-Service animals in residence. In order for a student with a disability to qualify for such an accommodation, documentation of a condition that rises to the level of a disability must be submitted which establishes the need for the therapeutic nature of the animal that is connected to the individual's disability. There must be a relationship, or nexus, between the individual's disability and the assistance the animal provides. Further, documentation must establish that the Emotional Support Animal is necessary to afford the individual with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling or to participate in the housing program.

Unlike a service animal, an ESA does not need to be trained to provide a service or task and does not accompany the person with a disability at all times. To summarize, a student may qualify for this accommodation if:

- the student has a documented disorder that rises to the level of a disability;
- the animal is necessary to afford the student with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy their dwelling; and
- there is an identifiable and documented nexus between the disability and the assistance that the animal provides. The University will allow only those ESAs that are allowed by local and state laws and conform to standards within these laws.

The student will be required to submit a signed letter on professional letterhead from the treating psychiatrist or psychologist who can provide documentation regarding the student's disability or diagnosis as it pertains to the need for an ESA. The Office of Special Support Services will review documentation and make a recommendation to the Office of Student Development. The Director of Student Development will meet with the student requesting the ESA to review this policy line by line, and the student will be expected to sign that he or she understands and agrees to the policy.

Service Animals for Campus Guests

For campus guests, if it is readily apparent that the individual has a disability and that the animal is a service animal, no further information will be requested. If it is not readily apparent, the individual will be asked if the animal is required because of a disability and to explain the task(s) the animal has been trained to perform. The animal will not be required to demonstrate the task(s) and no documentation of training will be required.

Service Animals in Training

Pursuant to OCGA § 30-4-3, Truett McConnell University is required by Georgia law to make the same reasonable accommodations for a person training service animals as a person with a disability and are, therefore, bound by this policy.

Responsibility of the Owner

Once a Service or Emotional Support Animal is approved through the Office of Special Support Services, the following expectations must be met by the owner in order for the animal to continue residing in campus housing:

Health, sanitary, safety, and disruptive standards must be maintained as follows:

1. Animals require daily food and attention, as well as a daily assessment of their general health, behavior and overall welfare. The Office of Student Development reserves the right to determine whether or not an animal is being properly cared for.
2. Animals cannot be left unattended for prolonged periods of time, including overnight. If the owner must be away, they must either take the animal with them, or make arrangements for them to be cared for elsewhere off campus. Roommates, suitemates, fellow students, faculty or staff, or off campus guests are not able to care for the animal under any circumstance.
3. Emotional support animals must not be taken into administrative offices, common spaces defined as any space that students share (bathrooms, living rooms, lobbies, front lawns, etc.), or student living areas outside of the owner's assigned room.
4. Animal feces, defined as cat litter box contents and any solid animal waste, must be disposed of properly. It is the owner's responsibility to remove feces from the University grounds, dispose of it in a plastic bag, and then place that bag in the garbage dumpsters outside. Cleanup must occur *immediately*. Animal feces may not be disposed of in any trash receptacle or through the sewer system inside any building of the University. Waste must be taken to any apartment or residence hall dumpster for disposal.
5. Residents with cats must properly maintain litter boxes. In consideration of the health of the cat and occupants of the apartment or the residence hall room, cat litter box contents must be disposed of properly and regularly. The litter box must be changed with new cat litter regularly as outlined by the manufacturer and should be placed on mats so that feces and urine are not tracked onto other surfaces.
6. Animal accidents within the residence hall room or apartment must be promptly cleaned up using appropriate cleaning products. If urine or solid waste stains are detected, flooring must be replaced, and the owner will be held financially responsible.

7. The owner is financially and legally responsible for the actions of the Service or Emotional Support Animal such as bodily injury or property damage including, but not limited to, any replacement of furniture, carpet, drapes, or wall coverings, etc. University Housing shall have the right to bill the resident's account for necessary repair and/or replacement costs.
8. Any flea infestation must be attended to promptly by scheduling a professional extermination company under University contract at owner's expense: minimum charges of \$225 per application will be placed on owner's account. Owners are expected to promptly notify the Office of Student Development and arrange for extermination when a flea problem is noted. Animal owners must take precautionary measures such as: flea medications prescribed by veterinarians, flea and tick collars, taking your animal to the veterinarian for flea and tick baths. Because not all of the precautions listed here can prevent flea and tick infestations, the owner is responsible for extermination costs after vacating the apartment or residence hall room; minimum charges of \$225 per application will be placed on owner's account.
9. Regular and routine cleaning of floors, kennels, cages, and litter boxes must occur. The odor of an animal emanating from the residence hall room or apartment is not acceptable.
10. Animals must not be allowed to disrupt others (e.g., barking continuously, growling, yowling, howling, etc.). Animals that constitute a threat or nuisance to staff, residents or property, as determined by the Director of Student Development, must be removed within seven (7) days of notification. If the Director determines that the animal poses an immediate threat, animal control may be summoned to remove the animal. If the owner can address the behavior of the animal, and the owner can change the behavior of an animal so that the animal does not have to be removed, then a written action plan must be submitted by the owner. The action plan must outline the action that will take place to alleviate the problems and also must give a deadline as to the length of time the plan will take. Any action plan must meet the approval of the Director. The day after the deadline for removal from the apartment, University staff will do a residence hall room or apartment inspection to check damages and infestation and then the mandatory cleaning and extermination will be scheduled (see 6-8 above). Any animal owner found not adhering to the removal directive will be subject to disciplinary action.
11. An animal must not be involved in an incident where a person experiences either the threat of or an actual injury as a result of the animal's behavior.
12. The owner will take all reasonable precautions to protect University staff and residents; as well as the property of the University and of the residents.
13. The owner will notify the Office of Student Development if the animal has escaped its confines and is unable to be located within four (4) hours.
14. All liability for the actions of the animal (bites, scratches, etc.) is the responsibility of the owner.
15. The University has the ability to relocate the owner and the Service Animal s necessary per current contractual agreements.

Standards for Approved Service or Emotional Support Animals

All roommates, suitemates, or apartment mates of the owner must agree to allowing the Service or Emotional Support Animal to reside with them. In the event that one or more roommates, suitemates, apartment mates do not approve, either the owner, Service/Emotional Support Animal or the non-approving roommates, suitemates, or apartment mates, as determined by University Housing, may be reassigned to a more suitable location. Sensitivity to individuals with allergies and to those who fear animals is important to ensure the integrity of the academic and residential community.

All approved Service or Emotional Support Animals must comply with applicable laws regarding animals and their treatment and care and also meet the following standards:

Dogs:

1. All required immunizations must be up-to-date and a copy of the immunizations must be on file with University Housing.
2. Dogs must be licensed and a copy of the license must be on file with University Housing.
3. Dogs must be spayed or neutered. A copy of the veterinarian's report must be on file with University Housing.
4. Collars and tags must be worn at all times. The dog must be kept on a leash at all times when outside the residence hall or apartment. Dogs must never be allowed to run freely.
5. Dogs must possess friendly and sociable characteristics. A specific dog can be restricted from the premises by the Director of Student Development or Vice President of Student Services based on any confirmed threatening or territorial behavior.
6. Dog obedience and training programs are highly recommended.

Domestic Cats:

1. All required immunizations must be up-to-date and a copy of the immunizations must be on file with University Housing.
2. Cats must be licensed and a copy of the license must be on file with University Housing.
3. Cats must be spayed or neutered. A copy of the veterinarian's report must be on file with University Housing.
4. Collars and tags must be worn at all times. The cat must be kept on a leash at all times when outside the residence hall or apartment. Cats must never be allowed to run freely.

Any Other Animal:

To be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Conflicting Needs/Health Concerns

The Office of Student Development will make a reasonable effort to notify residents in the building where the animal will be located. Individuals who have medical issues and are affected by the animal (i.e. asthma, severe allergies, or phobias) should contact the Office of Special Support Services and Student Development immediately. Reasonable accommodations may be made to consider the needs of all parties involved.

Expectations of University Community

Students, faculty and staff are expected to abide by the following practices:

1. Allow Service Animal to accompany its owner at all times in all places on campus, except where the presence of the Service Animal would present and unreasonable threat to health or safety.
2. Do not touch or pet a Service or Emotional Support Animal.
3. Do not feed a Service or Emotional Support Animal.
4. Do not deliberately startle or harass a Service or Emotional Support Animal.
5. Do not separate or attempt to separate a Service or Emotional Support Animal from its owner.
6. Do not inquire for details regarding a person's disability as that is a private matter.

Removal of Service or Emotional Support Animal

A Service or Emotional Support Animal may be removed from University facilities if the owner or animal fails to comply with this policy. Reasons for an animal's removal include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Is not approved by the Director of Special Support Services
2. Is not approved by the Director of Student Development
3. Poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others
4. Do not deliberately startle or harass a Service or Emotional Support Animal.
5. Would cause substantial physical damage to the property of the University and other residents
6. Would fundamentally alter the nature of the University's housing operations.