



Policy for Service and Emotional Support Animals on Campus

I. Service animals

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that a “covered entity” permit the use of a service animal by an individual with a disability in any area open to the general public. The ADA defines a service animal as any dog (and in some cases miniature horses) 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 task performed by a service animal must be directly related to the person’s disability. Dogs, and in some cases miniature horses, are the only species considered as service animals.

Meredith College does not require documentation, such as proof that the animal has been certified, licensed, or trained as a service animal. Members of the Meredith College community should not ask about the nature or extent of a person’s disability to determine whether a person’s animal qualifies as a service animal. Members of the Meredith College community may make two inquiries to determine whether the dog qualifies as a service animal, which are:

1. Is the service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task(s) has the animal been trained to perform?

II. Emotional Support Animals (ESAs)

Federal law allows qualified individuals with disabilities the use of emotional support animals in Meredith College housing. The Fair Housing Act (FHA) states that emotional support animals may be necessary for individuals with disabilities in order to afford the individual an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling or to participate in the housing service or program. Emotional support animals are not allowed in all areas of campus, but may occupy campus housing, including the student’s room and common areas, only. Emotional support animals are not service animals and need not have specialized training.

An emotional support animal may not reside in Meredith College housing without approval. A student requesting permission to have an emotional support animal in campus housing must become certified with Disability Services. *Unauthorized ESAs may delay approval of the accommodation and result in a \$50.00 fine.* As part of the certification process and the request for an emotional support animal in Meredith College housing, the student must:

1. Complete an Intake appointment with a Disability Counselor. Visit the main office in 208 Carroll Hall or call 919-760-8427 to schedule an appointment.
2. Provide Disability Services with documentation that meets the documentation guidelines. For more information about the documentation guidelines and becoming certified with Disability Services, visit www.meredith.edu/disability and select certification process.

3. Provide documentation from a qualified professional that supports the therapeutic purpose of an emotional support animal for the individual with a disability. The documentation must include:
 - Confirmation that the emotional support animal has been prescribed for treatment and is necessary for managing the symptoms associated with the student's disability.
 - Support and rationale related to how the animal will create equal access for the individual in using and enjoying campus housing at Meredith and its related programs and services.
 - A description of the service(s) the animal will provide.
4. Additionally, Disability Services may request documentation about the animal, such as vaccination and licensing records.

Disability Services requires *a minimum of 30 days advance notice* to gather, review, and verify the necessary documentation prior to making a determination regarding the emotional support animal. Disability Services may communicate with the student with a disability and the appropriate Residence Life staff to carefully review this policy and associated considerations. If approved, Disability Services will notify the student and appropriate Residence Life staff. As needed, Disability Services and/or Residence Life may inform other departments that the student is permitted to have the animal in campus housing.

Unauthorized ESAs may delay approval of the accommodation and result in a \$50.00 fine.

III. Responsibilities of Individuals with Service Animals or Emotional Support Animals

Meredith College is not responsible for the cost, care, or supervision of service animals or emotional support animals. The handler is responsible for all of the following:

- Control of the service or emotional support animal at all times which may include restraining the animal with a harness, leash, or tether, unless either the handler is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash, or tether, or the use of a harness, leash, or other tether would interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks. If the service animal is not tethered, it must be otherwise under the handler's control (e.g. voice control, signals, or other effective means).
- Spaying or neutering the animal prior to arrival on campus.
- Keeping the animal well-groomed and free from ticks and fleas at all times.
- Designating a local alternative caregiver for the animal when the handler may be unable to do so.
- Identifying a local veterinarian to provide treatment for the animal when needed.
- Immediate clean-up and proper disposal of all animal waste in the designated areas. Students may contact Disability Services for information about the approved areas.
- Ensuring that the animal behaves appropriately at all times and adheres to the same socially accepted standards as any individual in the college community. Unacceptable behaviors or situations may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Excessive barking, meowing, or other noise
 - Unpleasant odors
 - Significant shedding



- Liability and related cost for injuries to others or for damage to college property caused by the animal.

The living spaces of students who have a service animal or an emotional support animal may be inspected for cleanliness and adherence to all published policies. Inspections may be performed by the Director of Residence Life, the Assistant Director for Disability Services, or another college official. The timing and notification of any inspections will be at the discretion of the Director of Residence Life or the Assistant Director for Disability Services.

IV. Exceptions and Exclusions

Meredith College may pose restrictions on and may even exclude a service or emotional support animal in certain instances. Restrictions or exclusions will be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with applicable laws and published policies.

A service or emotional support animal may be excluded from campus, classrooms, or other facilities, if:

- It poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be reduced or eliminated by reasonable modifications.
- It is out of control or is disruptive and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control it.
- It is not housebroken.
- Its presence alters the nature of the programs, services, or activities.

Disability Services, with consultation from other Meredith College departments (i.e., Residence Life), is responsible for the verification of and making decisions about the exclusion of any service or emotional support animal. The exclusion procedure will include an individualized assessment of all relevant facts and evidence in support of the exclusion. Handlers will have an opportunity to resolve the issues that would warrant the exclusion prior to final decisions about the exclusion.

If an exclusion decision is verified and determined to be fair and reasonable, the handler will have 48 hours to remove the service animal or emotional support animal from campus.

V. Grievances

Handlers who are dissatisfied with a decision concerning a service animal or an emotional support animal have the right to file an appeal or grievance regarding the decision. Students who wish to file a grievance must follow the Disability Grievance Procedure found on the Disability Services website at meredith.edu/disability under Policies and Procedures. During the appeal or grievance period, the service animal or emotional support animal will be relocated to the designated alternate caregiver.

VI. Guidelines for Members of the Meredith College Community

To ensure equal access and nondiscrimination of people with disabilities, members of the Meredith College community must adhere to the following guidance and practices:

- Do not assume that a service animal is a pet.
- Refrain from asking questions about a person's disability. However, if an individual's need for a service animal and the qualifications of the animal are not obvious, the handler may be asked these two questions only.
 1. Is the animal is required because of a disability?
 2. What work or task(s) is the animal individually trained to perform?
- Do not pet a service animal or emotional support animal, as it distracts the animal from its work or task and may jeopardize the safety of its handler.
- Direct all questions and concerns about service and emotional support animals to Disability Services.

VII. Definitions

Domestic animal/pet—An animal that regularly occupies areas with people for companionship. Service animals and emotional support animals are not considered domestic animals or pets.

Emotional support animal—An animal selected or prescribed to provide passive assistance, emotional support, and/or comfort to an individual with a disability. Unlike service animals and/or therapy animals, emotional support animals are not trained to perform a certain task or respond to specific stimuli.

Handler—The user of and the person responsible for a service animal or emotional support animal.

Service animal—An animal (dogs and, in some cases, miniature horses) that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability including physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disabilities.

Therapy animal—An animal trained in Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) as evidenced by receipt of the Canine Good Citizen (CGC) certificate from the American Kennel Club (AKC), or registration by a national therapy animal organization. Therapy animals are used by health care or mental health professionals in a therapeutic setting. A therapy animal is not a service or emotional support animal in that it is not used exclusively for people with disabilities. Likewise, a therapy animal is not an emotional support animal in that it typically has received formalized training.