POLICY FOR
SERVICE AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT/COMFORT ANIMALS

I. Service Animals, including Service Animals in Training
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.

Additionally, service animals in training may be brought onto the premises of entities that serve the public for the purpose of training. When the animal is accompanied by a trainer, the service animal wears a collar and leash, harness, or cape that indicates it is a service animal in training.

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

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/Comfort Animals
Federal law allows qualified individuals with disabilities the use of emotional support/comfort animals in Meredith College housing. The Fair Housing Act (FHA) states that emotional support/comfort 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/comfort animals are not allowed in all areas of campus, but may occupy campus housing, specifically the student’s private living environment. Emotional support animals are not service animals or therapy animals and need not have specialized training.
Prior Approval
An emotional support/comfort animal may not reside in Meredith College housing without prior approval. A student requesting permission to have an emotional support/comfort animal in campus housing must also become certified with Disability Services. As part of the certification process and the request for an Emotional Support Animal in Meredith College housing, the student must:

1) Schedule an intake interview at your earliest convenience by calling 919 760-8427 or stopping by 208 Carroll Hall between 1 and 5pm (weekdays only)
2) Provide documentation from a qualified professional who has prescribed an emotional support/comfort animal based on the therapeutic benefits for people with disabilities. The documentation must include:

- Confirmation that the emotional support animal has been prescribed for treatment purposes and is necessary to help alleviate symptoms associated with the student’s disability.
- A description of the functional limitations the animal will offset
- Supportive rationale on how the animal will provide the individual equal access to the use and enjoyment of campus housing at Meredith and its related programs and services
- Type of animal

For more information about documentation guidelines and becoming certified with Disability Services, please visit www.meredith.edu/disability. Additionally, Residence Life may request documentation in accordance with applicable laws such as: vaccination or licensing records.

Approval Process
Disability Services requires a minimum of 30 days advance notice to gather, review, and verify the necessary documentation prior to making a determining approval for 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 in writing. For the potential health and safety of all parties involved, Disability Services and/or Residence Life reserves the right to inform other departments (such as Housekeeping or Facilities) that the student is permitted to have the animal in campus housing. Information regarding the student’s disability will not be disclosed.

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/comfort animals. Handlers are responsible for the control of their service or emotional support/comfort animal at all times. The handler is responsible for designating an alternative caregiver for the animal if the handler is unable to do so.
Restraint
Service animals must be restrained with a harness, leash, or tether at all times, 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).

Emotional support/comfort animals must be crated or otherwise secured in the student’s private living environment when the student is not present.

Waste
The handler is responsible for immediate clean-up and proper disposal of all animal waste. Meredith College will designate specific relief areas. Students should contact Disability Services for more information.

Damages and Fees
Meredith College will not require any surcharges or fees for service or emotional support/comfort animals. However, a handler may be charged for damage caused by the service or support animal/comfort to the same extent that Meredith College would normally charge a person for the damage they cause. A person who brings a service/comfort animal onto Meredith College property has all the responsibilities and liabilities placed on any person by any applicable law when that person owns or uses any animal, including liability for any damage done by the animal.

The handler is responsible for providing a copy of the animal’s vaccination and immunization records to the College upon request. The handler is also responsible for adhering to all local animal health ordinances. Students should provide this information to Residence Life once the housing accommodation is approved.

IV. Exceptions and Exclusions
Meredith College may pose some restrictions on and may even exclude a service or emotional support /comfort animal in certain instances. Restrictions or exclusions will be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with applicable laws. A service or emotional support/comfort animal may be excluded from campus, classrooms, or other facilities if the animal:

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

The exclusion procedure will include an individualized assessment of all pertinent 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.
V. Grievances

Handlers who are dissatisfied with a decision concerning a service animal or an emotional support/comfort animal have the right to file an appeal or grievance of the decision. Students who wish to file a grievance must follow the Disability Services Grievance Procedure found on the Disability Services website at www.meredith.edu/disability (under policies and procedures).

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:

(a) Do not assume that a service animal is a pet
(b) 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 only be asked:

(a) whether the animal is required because of a disability, and
(b) what work or task(s) the animal has been individually trained to perform

Do not pet a service animal or emotional support/comfort animal, as it distracts the animal from its work or task. For more information about Service Animal Etiquette, please visit the Disability Services website. Direct all questions and concerns about service and emotional support/comfort animals to Disability Services.

VII. Definitions

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.

Service Animal in Training – An animal that is being trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.

Emotional Support/Comfort 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/comfort animals are not trained to perform a certain task or respond to specific stimuli.

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 an emotional support/comfort animal in that it is not used exclusively for people with disabilities.
Likewise, a therapy animal is not an emotional support/comfort animal in that it typically has received formalized training.

**Domestic Animal/Pets** – An animal that regularly occupies areas with people for ordinary use and companionship. Service animals and emotional support/comfort animals are not considered domestic animals/pets.

**Handler** – the user of, and person responsible for, a service animal or emotional support/comfort animal.