

**Spartanburg Methodist College**  
**Service Animal and Emotional Support Animal Policy**  
**Revised June 2025**

**Purpose of Policy**

Spartanburg Methodist College recognizes that some students with disabilities may need either a service animal or an emotional support animal to mitigate the effects of a disability. As a result, the college has developed a policy to address this student need.

Spartanburg Methodist College reserves the right to amend this policy as circumstances might require. Spartanburg Methodist College complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended in 2008 (ADA) in permitting students to have Service Animals, along with compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Fair Housing Act.

**Service Animals**

**Service Animal Definition**

The ADA defines a Service Animal as “a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability.” Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, performing tasks to lessen the effect of an anxiety attack for a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), or performing other duties. Service Animals are working animals and not pets. The work or task a Service Animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability. If an animal meets this definition, it is considered a Service Animal regardless of whether it has been licensed or certified by a state or local government or a training program.

The ADA makes a distinction between psychiatric Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals. Animals whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as Service Animals under the ADA. For example, a dog that has been trained to sense that an anxiety attack is about to happen and takes a specific action to help avoid the attack or lessen its impact would qualify as a

Service Animal. A dog that provides comfort merely by its presence is not considered a Service Animal because the dog has not been trained to perform a task in relation to the person's disability. For more information about Emotional Support Animals, please refer to Spartanburg Methodist College's Emotional Support Animal Policy.

In addition to the provisions about service dogs, the ADA has established that under certain circumstances, miniature horses may be considered as Service Animals.

### **Designation as a Service Animal**

When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, the ADA only permits limited inquiries. Campus personnel may ask two questions: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what task(s) has the dog been trained to perform. Campus personnel cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task. A service dog can be any breed or size. It might wear specialized equipment such as a backpack, harness, or special collar or leash, but this is not a legal requirement.

### **The Rights and Responsibilities of Students with Service Animals on Campus**

The ADA allows Service Animals accompanying persons with disabilities to be on Spartanburg Methodist College's campus. A Service Animal must be permitted "to accompany people with disabilities in all areas where members of the public are allowed to go." Therefore, students with a Service Animal are permitted everywhere on campus where students are allowed to go, including food service locations, except in situations where safety might be compromised or where the animal's presence might compromise a sterile environment.

Allergies or a fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to students using Service Animals. In these types of situations, efforts should be made to accommodate both the person with allergies or fear of dogs and the student with a service animal.

Community Life is committed to supporting college residents with disabilities and their use of Service Animals while residing in campus housing. While not mandatory, students are encouraged to register their Service Animal with the Wellness Office. A voluntary registry, which is permitted by the ADA, may serve to ensure that emergency staff members know to look for Service Animals during an emergency evacuation process and allows other campus entities, such as Housekeeping, Facilities Services, or Campus Safety, to be aware of the presence of an animal in a residence hall living space.

Students with Service Animals must uphold the following responsibilities:

- The student is responsible for assuring that the Service Animal does not interfere with routine activities of the classroom, residence hall, or other college facilities or cause difficulties for students involved in these activities.
- The ADA requires that Service Animals should always be under the control of the handler. In most instances, the handler will be the student with a disability. Service Animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered while in public places unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the student's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the student must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls. "Under control" also means that the service animal should not be allowed to bark repeatedly in a lecture hall, theater, library, or other quiet place. However, if a dog barks just once, or barks because someone has provoked it, this would not be considered out of control.
- The student is responsible for caring for and supervising the service animal, which includes toileting, feeding, grooming and veterinary care. The animal should be appropriately taken care of and in good health. The college is not obligated to supervise, provide food and water, or otherwise care for a Service Animal.
- The student is responsible for the immediate and appropriate disposal of the Service Animal's waste from all campus facilities and areas. All waste and used cleaning supplies must be disposed of in a trash receptacle outside of the residence halls and campus buildings. Waste must be placed in a sturdy

plastic bag and securely tied before disposing of the bag in an outside trash receptacle.

- The student with a Service Animal must abide by current county and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to licensing, vaccination, and other requirements for animals. Spartanburg County Ordinance 0-12-01, section 6-8 holds that no one “shall own, keep, or harbor any dog or cat over four months of age within Spartanburg County unless such dog or cat is vaccinated against rabies.” (<https://www.spartanburgcounty.org/393/Animal-Control>)
- The Service Animal cannot pose a direct threat to the health and safety of anyone on the college campus. A student may be asked to remove a Service Animal from the premises if: (1) the Service Animal is out of control, and the handler does not take effective action to control it, (2) the Service Animal is not housebroken, or (3) the Service Animal is not being cared for adequately. When there is a legitimate reason to ask that a Service Animal be removed, staff must first offer the student with a disability the opportunity to remedy the issue.

In keeping with appropriate college policies and procedures, the student may be charged for damage caused by the student or the Service Animal. The student is financially responsible for the actions of their Service Animal including bodily injury or property damage. The student is expected to cover these costs at the time of repair or at move out as determined by Community Life staff. Likewise, the student is responsible for expenses incurred due to the need for cleaning above and beyond standard cleaning or repair of college property. The college may bill the student’s account for unmet obligations.

### **Vaccination Records**

In Spartanburg County, South Carolina, the primary vaccination requirement for animals is the rabies vaccine. This is required by both state law and local ordinance.

Specifically:

- Dogs, cats, and ferrets over four months of age must be vaccinated against rabies.

- The vaccination must be administered by a licensed veterinarian.
- Evidence of rabies vaccination is a certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian.
- Pets must wear a rabies vaccination tag attached to their collar or harness.
- Annual rabies vaccination is generally required to maintain continuous protection, although some veterinarians offer multi-year vaccines that satisfy the legal requirement.

Additionally:

While rabies is the only specifically mandated vaccine, other vaccinations are often recommended for overall animal health, such as:

- Distemper: Essential for both indoor and outdoor dogs due to its fatal nature.
- Parvovirus: Can cause acute gastrointestinal illness in puppies.
- Bordetella: Recommended for dogs that socialize with other dogs to prevent kennel cough.
- FeLV (Feline Leukemia Virus): Important for cats, especially those who go outside.
- FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, and Panleukopenia): A common yearly vaccination for cats.

In summary, while rabies is the only legally required vaccination in Spartanburg County, other vaccinations are strongly recommended for the health and safety of your animal and the community. Always consult with your veterinarian to determine the best vaccination plan for your animal based on their individual needs and lifestyle.

A record of vaccinations should be submitted to the Wellness Center, with updates provided each year.

### **Campus Community Reminders about Service Animals**

Students, faculty, and staff should remember the following when they encounter an individual with a service animal:

- Do not pet a service animal without first asking permission; touching the animal might distract it from its work.

- Speak first to the person.
- Do not deliberately startle a service animal.
- Do not feed a service animal.
- Do not separate or attempt to separate a person from their service animal.
- In case of an emergency, every effort should be made to keep the service animal with its student.

For questions regarding this policy, please contact the Wellness Center by emailing [WellnessGroup@smcsc.edu](mailto:WellnessGroup@smcsc.edu).

## **Emotional Support Animals**

### **Definition of an Emotional Support Animal**

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an emotional support animal is any animal that provides emotional support alleviating one or more symptoms or effects of a person's disability. Emotional support animals provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. Emotional support animals are not limited to dogs. (*Service Animal or Emotional Support Animal: What's the Difference?*, n.d.) An Emotional Support Animal is not a Service Animal. A pet is not considered a Service or Emotional Support Animal. Residents are not permitted to have or keep pets in university housing.

### **Behavior and Handling Requirements for ESAs**

The following behavioral requirements apply to domesticated dogs and cats. Student requests for any other animal will be considered on a case-by-case basis. ***Dangerous, venomous/poisonous, and/or illegal animals are not permitted.***

As noted above, an approved ESA may reside in campus housing with its owner when the animal's behavior and care do not create unreasonable disruptions for other residents, staff, and other college community members. Disruptions,

including noise levels, will be addressed by Community Life staff in the same manner as disruptive behaviors are addressed with all students and their guests.

### **Animal Control**

The ESA must be under the control of its owner or approved designee at all times while in the student's assigned campus housing.

- It is expected that the ESA will be controlled by a leash or harness at all times while in the owner's assigned campus housing.
- The ESA may be off-leash/harness within the confines of the owner's bedroom but must remain under the control of the owner or designee and must be leashed/harnessed outside of the bedroom. Additionally, the ESA must be leashed/harnessed within their bedroom upon request.
- When the ESA is unattended, it must remain crated in the owner's bedroom.
- The ESA is generally not permitted in any college facility other than the owner's assigned campus housing.

### **Animal Health and Wellbeing**

- All ESAs must have all veterinarian-recommended vaccinations to maintain the animal's health and prevent contagious diseases. The City of Spartanburg requires that animals must have up-to-date rabies vaccinations. Other recommended vaccinations from the City of Spartanburg include:
  - Distemper: Essential for both indoor and outdoor dogs due to its fatal nature.
  - Parvovirus: Can cause acute gastrointestinal illness in puppies.
  - Bordetella: Recommended for dogs that socialize with other dogs to prevent kennel cough.
  - FeLV (Feline Leukemia Virus): Important for cats, especially those who go outside.
  - FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, and Panleukopenia): A common yearly vaccination for cats.

ESA owners are expected to submit documentation of vaccinations before July 1 for the fall semester and November 1 for the spring semester.

- The college reserves the right to request updated documentation of vaccinations at any time during the animal's residency.
- All ESAs taken outside of the residence must have identification tags with ESA owner's contact information and an up-to-date rabies tag from the county or state of the student's residence.
- ESAs that are ill should not be taken into public areas.
  - Students with an ill animal may be asked to leave college facilities or remove the animal from campus.

### **Animal Cleanliness**

- ESA owners or designees are responsible for properly containing and disposing of the ESA's solid waste (e.g. feces).
- Indoor solid waste and/or used litter must be placed in a plastic bag and securely tied before being disposed of in an outside trash receptacle. Indoor solid waste must be removed in a timely and regular manner. Litter boxes should be cleaned regularly and placed on mats to minimize contamination of carpeted surfaces.
- Outdoor solid waste must be immediately retrieved by the ESA owner or their designee, placed in a plastic bag, and securely tied before being disposed of in an outside trash receptacle.
- ESA owners or designees are responsible for feeding and watering the ESA within the confines of their bedroom.
- ESA food should be kept in a closed container in the ESA owner's bedroom.
- If the ESA vomits, urinates, leaves solid waste, and/or becomes incontinent, it is the responsibility of the ESA owner or their designee to make sure the contaminated area is cleaned up immediately.
  - If the contamination occurs indoors, the ESA owner or their designee should clean up immediately and contact Facilities for additional disinfection. If services to disinfect interior surfaces are required, all associated costs will be billed to the ESA owner.



- Bathing or cleaning of an ESA is expected to avoid odors and/or to manage shedding.
  - ESA owners or their designees may not use showers/tubs within campus housing to bathe or clean their ESA.
- ESA owners or their designees are responsible for taking effective precautions to avoid flea and tick infestations.
  - If the ESA is found to have fleas or ticks, the ESA owner will be responsible for reporting the issue to Community Life immediately, eliminating the fur coat infestation, and laundering all pet bedding.
  - Treatment of the ESA owner's living space and any other impacted spaces will be coordinated by Community Life, and all associated costs will be billed to the ESA owner.

### **ESA Owner Responsibilities**

- The ESA owner must provide the Wellness Office with the following via before an ESA will be approved:
  - Completed ESA Request for Information Form
  - Uploaded Veterinarian Verification Form
  - Completed ESA Owner Agreement(s)
- The ESA Owner is responsible for assuring that the ESA does not interfere with the routine activities of the college, including campus housing, or cause difficulties for students who reside there.
  - Sensitivity to individuals with allergies and to those who fear animals is an important consideration for the ESA owner to ensure an environment that supports the individual needs of all who reside or work at the college.
  - When an ESA owner is informed by a Community Assistant (CA) of another individual affected by their ESA, the CA will refer the individual to the Dean of Students.

- The ESA owner is financially responsible for the actions of the ESA, including bodily injury or property damage beyond ordinary wear and tear including, but not limited to, cleaning costs and any replacement of furniture, flooring, drapes, or wall coverings.
  - The ESA owner is expected to reimburse these costs upon repair and/or move-out.
  - If a repair is made prior to moving out, charges will be posted to the ESA owner's account for payment.
- The ESA owner agrees, as all students do, to continue to abide by all other college and Community Life policies. Having an ESA does not preclude the ESA owner from following all other college and Community Life policies.
- Any violation of the above guidelines and expectations will be documented and reviewed by Community Life. Repeated and/or severe violations may prompt disciplinary action.
- Should the Service or Emotional Support Animal be disqualified or removed from the premises for any reason, the owner will remain responsible for the terms and conditions of the housing agreement for the remainder of the term of the agreement.

## **Emergencies**

**In the event of an emergency that renders the owner of the Service Animal or Emotional Support Animal unable to care for the animal (i.e., serious illness, injury, etc.), the owner must have an alternate/ emergency caregiver designated. An alternate/emergency caregiver is required for all Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals on campus.**

- This person must be local to Spartanburg and be able to pick up an animal within 2 hours of being notified.
- Other students living in campus housing may NOT be an alternate/emergency caregiver.

If the student is unable to care for their animal and the alternate/emergency caregiver is unreachable, the Wellness Office will seek out local boarding services for the animal. The Service Animal or ESA owner will be responsible for all fees associated with said boarding services.

I have received a copy of the SMC Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals policy and understand its contents. I agree to abide by this policy regarding my Service Animal or Emotional Support Animal.

Student's Signature:

Date:

SMC Wellness Staff's Signature:

Date: