

## Service Animal Policy

### Service Animals

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines service animals as “dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. 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, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or tasks a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability.” 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. If a dog 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 further states that “dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.”

The ADA allows service animals accompanying persons with disabilities to be anywhere that is open to the public on University premises. University premises shall mean any land and/or facility owned, leased, rented and/or occupied by the University of Central Oklahoma. There may be individual exceptions in places where the presence of the service animal may compromise safety or a sterile environment and/or interfere with the fundamental nature of the activities being conducted in which the service animal would be not permitted.

### Voluntary Registration of Service Animals While on Campus

For those individuals who are enrolled in courses that would like to voluntarily register their service animal with the University, please contact Disability Support Services at (405) 974-2516 (NUC, room 305). As stated, this is voluntary, but may aide one in accessing the University premises. Registration is not available for visitors to campus or service dogs in training.

### Inquiries

The individual’s disability may not be visible. When it is not obvious what service an animal provides and the owner has chosen not to voluntarily register their service animal with UCO’s Disability Support Services, only limited inquiries are allowed. University personnel may ask two questions in determining the validity of the presence of the animal: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of your disability, and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform. University 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.

### **Requirements of Service Animals and their Owners**

1. The animal cannot pose a direct threat to the health and safety of persons while on the University's premises.
2. Local ordinances regarding animals apply to service animals, including requirements for immunization, licensing, noise, restraint, and at-large animals.
3. The owner must be in full control of the animal at all times. Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
4. The owner is responsible for cleaning up the animal's waste and fluids and disposing of such in outside trash containers only. Waste disposal via University plumbing is prohibited. The owner should always carry equipment sufficient to clean up and properly dispose of the animal's waste and fluids. Owners who are not physically able to pick up and dispose of the animal's waste and fluids are responsible for making all necessary arrangements for assistance. The University is not responsible for these services. Additionally, the animal is not to be bathed or its cage/crate, or bedding cleaned using University Housing or University facilities.
5. The owner is liable for damage caused by the animal.
6. The owner is responsible for instructing others on appropriate interactions with the animal and setting clear expectations.

### **Exclusions**

A service animal may be excluded from any authorized area and its owner may be subject to disciplinary action if, including, but not limited to:

- The service animal displays aggressive or disruptive behavior or noises and effective action is not taken to control it; unless said noise/behavior(s) are part of the needed disability service to the owner;
- The service animal is not housebroken;
- The service animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others;
- The service animal is not in good health, well-groomed, or cared for;
- The service animal infringes inappropriately into other's personal space;
- The owner intentionally uses the service animal to block identified fire/emergency exits.

NOTE: In the event that restriction or removal of a service animal is determined to be necessary, every effort will be made to assure that the individual still has access to the programs, services, or activities of the University without the animal.

### **Service Dog in Training (7 O.S. § 19.1)**

“Any dog trainer from a recognized training center when in the act of training guide, signal, or service dogs shall be entitled to have with him or her a guide, signal, or service dog specially trained or being trained for that purpose, without being required to pay an additional charge ... but shall be liable for any damage done to the premises by such dog.”

Because Oklahoma state law does not clarify further its use of the term “in training”, the University has established policy, based on accepted practices suggested by Assistance Dogs International (ADI). A service dog in training (generally 15-18 months old) is a dog, accompanied by its trainer from a recognized training center that is undergoing individual training to provide specific disability-related work or service for an individual with a disability. This does not include obedience training or socialization of puppies who may later become service animals. Thus, generally only adult dogs are recognized as being “in training” to provide disability-related work or service, and only after they have completed an earlier period of socialization (i.e. obedience training, being housebroken, getting acclimated to public places and every day activities as pets). As service dogs in training in Oklahoma are only given access rights when accompanied by a trainer from a recognized training center, they generally cannot be in-residence in University Housing, nor be present in other areas of campus except those places where all students are welcome. Puppies who are being raised/trained in preparation for participating in formal service animal training generally are not permitted in University Housing or on campus except where pets are allowed.

### **Definitions Relevant to Service Dogs in Training**

- "Physically handicapped person" means any person who has a physical impairment which severely and permanently restricts mobility of two or more extremities, or who is so severely disabled as to be unable to move without the aid of a wheelchair;
- "Guide dog" means any dog that is specially trained to guide a blind person;
- “Service dog” means any dog individually trained to the physically handicapped person's requirements; and
- "Signal dog" means any dog trained to alert a deaf or hard-of-hearing person to intruders or sounds.

### **Service Animals in Residence in University Housing**

Sufficient notice of the intent of an individual with a disability planning to have a service animal in University Housing must be given to Disability Support Services at (405) 974-2516 (NUC, room 305) so that appropriate arrangements regarding placement, roommates, etc. can be made. Service animals residing in University Housing are subject to the University’s Housing Service Animal and Emotional Support Animal Agreement Form. Registration is not available for visitors to campus.

### **University Employee Service Animal Information**

Please refer to the [Americans with Disabilities Act Policy Statement](#) maintained by UCO’s Human Resources.

### **Student Complaint Procedure**

Complaints arising under this policy shall be handled under the provisions of [University Policy 1.5 “Student Complaint Procedure in Cases of Alleged Disability Discrimination and/or Harassment”](#).

The University reserves the right to modify this policy as needed. For additional information concerning the use of a service animal or other accommodations and services, please contact Disability Support Services at (405) 974-2516 (NUC, room 305) or visit the DSS website at [uco.edu](http://uco.edu).