



Policy # 69100

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT & SERVICE ASSISTANCE ANIMALS (ESSA)

Original Effective Date:

Review Date: January 1, 2022

Responsible Office: University Counseling Center

Division: Student Affairs

I. PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE

To establish clear processes and procedures for institutional offices to utilize when reviewing, approving, denying, and governing emotional support and service animals.

II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The University will permit the use of a service animal by an individual with a disability who satisfies the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The University will permit the use of an emotional support assistance animal as a reasonable accommodation by an individual with a disability who satisfies the requirements of the Fair Housing Amendments Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The use of a service animal is allowed in all areas of the University where members of the public, participants in services, programs or activities, or invitees are normally allowed to go, unless it would fundamentally alter the nature of the goods, services, programs, or activities provided by the University or is prohibited by health laws (i.e., food preparation areas, swimming pools, sterile laboratories, etc.).

The use of an emotional support assistance animal is only allowed in the approved person's specifically designated areas only, and are not allowed in any other university-controlled buildings, or athletic facilities, or outside upon other University property, unless areas are specifically designated by the University Counseling Center as an area where animals may be walked, except at times when the emotional support animal is entering or exiting University property.

A. Registration and Inquiries

1. **Accommodation Request and Registration:** All requests shall be made by filling out the Grambling State University Service and Emotional Support Assistance Animal Accommodation Request Form. This form is located in the University Counseling Center.
2. **Service Animals:** The University does not require students and employees to register a service animal with the institution so long as the person confines his or her service animal to areas of the University open to the public and does not take the animal into areas with limited or restricted access (such as residence halls, employee-only areas, or classrooms). Students and employees may

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choose to register the service animal that only accesses public areas via the University's voluntary registration program. If a service animal is to have access to the residence halls for purposes other than its student owner visiting a resident, it must be registered with the University Counseling Center.

3. Emotional Support Animals: The University requires students wishing to keep an emotional support assistance animal in their residence hall to register and request a reasonable accommodation via the Office of Residential Life, and upon recommendation of the University Counseling Center. The University requires employees wishing to keep an emotional support assistance animal in their on campus work space and/or academic teaching location(s) to register and request a reasonable accommodation via the Office of Human Resources, and upon recommendation of the University Counseling Center.

B. Staff Inquiries:

Service Animals. In circumstances where it is not readily apparent what service the animal is providing, University staff may ask the student or employee all of the following:

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

C. Emotional Support Animals:

In evaluating a request for an emotional support assistance animal, designated University Counseling Center staff shall consider all of the following criteria:

1. Does the person seeking to use and/or live with the animal have a disability (i.e., a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities)?
2. Does the person making the request have a disability-related need for an assistance animal? In other words, does the animal provide emotional support that alleviates one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability?
3. Is the person currently registered with the University Counseling Center with an established disability (i.e., a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities); and receiving other university accommodations?
4. If the person does not meet all three of the above requirements, the request for reasonable accommodation with an emotional support animal will be denied. If the person meets all requirements and provides sufficient documentation where required, the University will provide reasonable accommodation.

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D. Documentation:

1. **Service Animal:** If the person takes (or desires to take) a service animal into areas of the University with limited or restricted access (such as residence halls, employee-only areas, or classrooms), University staff may request medical documentation of an existing disability, one or more identified symptoms of which are alleviated by the service animal. However, the University will not require medical documentation pertaining to the person's disability, a special identification card, or training documentation for the service animal, or ask that the animal demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task so long as access with the service animal is confined to areas of the University open to the public.
2. **Emotional Support Animals:** The University may ask individuals with disabilities that are not readily apparent or already known to submit reliable documentation of a disability and their disability-related need for an assistance animal. Persons requesting reasonable accommodation for an emotional support animal will be required to provide documentation from a physician, psychiatrist, social worker, or other mental health professional that the animal provides emotional support that alleviates one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of a disability.

E. Responsibilities and Procedures:

1. **Deadlines.** Students and employees requesting to have a service or emotional support assistance animal on University property must notify the Office of Residential Life by submitting the forms to the University Counseling Center at least thirty (30) days prior to the semester that prospective housing is needed. All documentation needs to be submitted as a packet with medical documentation, veterinarian documentation, and the animal's clean bill of health.
2. **Annual Renewal:** Approval to have a service or emotional support assistance animal on University property must be updated a minimum of thirty (30) days prior to each new academic year (fall to summer).
3. **University-Provided Housing Roommate Notification and Approval:** The student should notify and seek approval from roommates and proposed roommates via email or other form of written communication and attach said approval or indicate the lack thereof alongside the request for the service or emotional support assistance animal, including annual renewals. Lack of roommate approval may impact housing assignments but will not change the University's obligation to allow reasonable animal-related disability accommodations.
4. **Notice of Removal or Replacement Animal:** The student must notify Residential Life; and employees must notify Human Resources in writing if the animal is no longer to be kept on university property. To replace an animal

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with another animal, students and employees must file a new accommodation request with the University Counseling Center.

5. **Access:** Animals must stay in the designated and assigned area unless they are accompanied by the student, and may not be allowed to roam freely through common areas. While service animals may accompany the designated person at all times and in most locations on University property, emotional support assistance animals are permitted only in the approved person's campus work space and/or academic teaching location(s), residence hall, outside areas specifically designated by the University for walks, and the pathways for entry and exit to University property. Specific Access to University academic buildings must be cleared with the Office of the Provost, upon recommendation from the University Counseling Center.
6. **Care and Supervision:** The approved student or employee will be responsible for the care and supervision of his or her animal. The University is not responsible for the care or supervision of a service or emotional support animal. If the approved student or employee is not in the physical presence of his or her animal, the animal must be in a closed crate no larger than necessary given the animal's size and manufacturer's specifications. Any and all liability for the actions of the animal is the responsibility of the approved student or employee, including but not limited to damage involving personal or private property of the University or others.
7. **Control:** An animal must be under the control of its handler. Except when in a closed crate, the animal must have a harness, leash, or other tether in use at all times, unless it is a service animal and either the handler is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash, or other tether, or the use of a harness, leash, or other tether would interfere with the animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the animal must be otherwise under the handler's control (i.e., voice control, signals, or other effective means).
8. **Unsupervised Time:** An animal may not be left alone in the approved person's campus workspace and/or academic teaching location(s), residence hall or (if applicable) classroom location.
9. **Training:** Before coming on University property, all service and emotional support animals must be housetrained. Housetrained means the animal is able to consistently control its waste elimination. Crate-trained means the animal is able to consistently be confined to a closed crate without barking, whining, or whimpering.
10. **Service Animals:** The service animal must be trained to perform a specific job or task in connection with its ability to assist the disabled person and such training is the responsibility of the approved person. Persons with disabilities may train the service animal themselves and are not required to use a professional service animal training program.

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11. **Emotional Support Animals:** The emotional support assistance animal does not have to be trained in connection with its ability to assist the disabled person but its presence must be necessary to alleviate one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability.
12. **Health and Cleanliness:** All animals must be in good health and the University has the authority to temporarily or permanently exclude an animal from University property if the animal is in ill health or habitually unclean. The approved person must provide an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian to the University Counseling Center. If concern is brought to the University Counseling Center regarding the animal's health, the student must provide a current clean bill of health from a veterinary professional.
13. **Vaccination, Leash Laws, and Other Animal Health Laws:** In regard to this policy, any approved student or employee with disabilities must comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including vaccination, licensure, animal health, and leash laws. The approved person must ensure that the animal has been immunized against diseases and treated for pests, such as fleas and ticks, common to that type of animal. Animals must have current vaccination against rabies, wear a valid rabies vaccination tag, and be properly licensed. The approved person will provide the University Counseling Center with appropriate documentation confirming vaccinations, licenses, and pest treatments.
14. **Waste Disposal:** Animals may be walked for purposes of waste elimination only in areas designated and approved for such use by the Office of Facilities Management. Approved persons are responsible for ensuring the immediate clean up and proper disposal of all animal waste. Animal waste is not to be disposed of indoors.
15. **Health and Safety:** The animal must not pose a threat to the health or safety of students, faculty, visitors, or any other persons on University property.
16. **Disruptive Behavior Policy:** The University has the authority to temporarily or permanently exclude an animal from University property if the animal's behavior is unruly or disruptive. The decision to exclude an animal from the University will be made by the University Counseling Center if the animal is deemed a direct threat to the health and safety of others after hearing information from all parties involved, except where the situation is an emergency, and the removal is temporary until such information can be considered.
17. **Equipment:** The equipment necessary for the safe keeping of the animal must not pose a threat to the safety of others and may not block evacuation routes or egress in case of an emergency.
18. **Quiet Use and Enjoyment:** Animals must not make excessive noise or display behavior that will disrupt other community members' quiet use and enjoyment of University property.

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19. **Examples of Disruptive Behavior:** The approved person must ensure that the animal does not:
- A. ATTACK, harass, jump on/at or disrupt others or their personal belongings;
 - B. DISPLAY any repeated behavior or make noise that is disruptive to others;
 - C. Block evacuation routes or egress in case of an emergency; and
 - D. Leave the approved designated areas except when accompanied by the approved person.
20. **Grooming and Upkeep:** Grooming and upkeep of the animal cannot take place within the residence halls or anywhere on University property.
21. **Damage to Property:** The University shall not charge students or employees with service or emotional support animals a surcharge. However, the University may charge for damages caused by the service animal.
22. **Emergencies:** The University is not responsible for an animal during a fire alarm, fire drill, natural disaster, or other emergency situation.

E. Exclusions:

The University may exclude an animal from University property if:

1. The specific animal is out of control and the approved person does not take effective action to control it (i.e. barks repeatedly in a lecture hall, residence hall, theater, library, or other quiet place so as to disturb the quiet enjoyment of a residence hall by student residents);
2. The specific animal would impose an undue financial and administrative burden or would fundamentally alter the nature of the University's services;
3. The specific animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level by a reasonable modification to other policies, practices, and procedures (i.e. the specific animal is not housebroken or trained so that, absent illness or accident, the animal consistently controls its waste elimination); or
4. The specific animal in question would cause substantial physical damage to the property of others that cannot be reduced or eliminated by another reasonable accommodation.

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To determine whether there is cause for exclusion, the University will conduct an individualized assessment of the specific animal's actual conduct, giving consideration to the facts and circumstances of each case. If the University excludes an animal, it shall give the student with the disability the opportunity to participate in the service, program, or activity without having the animal on University property and the opportunity to participate with another animal.

G. Appeals and Grievances: Any student dissatisfied by a decision concerning a service or emotional support animal may appeal through the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). The VPSA can be reached by phone at 318-274-6120 or email at studentaffairs@gram.edu . Employees dissatisfied by a decision concerning a service or emotional support animal may appeal through the Office of Human Resources.

III. REVISION/REVISED HISTORY

January 25, 2022- Reviewed

June 19, 2018-Revision