



SERVICE AND COMFORT ANIMALS POLICY

Russell Sage College (the "College") complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) the Fair Housing Act ("FHA") and the New York State Human Rights Law ("HRL") in allowing use of service animals for students, staff, and visitors. Service animals are animals specifically trained to assist people with disabilities in the activities of normal living.

The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the handler's disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to: assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks as a service animal.

Definitions

- **Service Animal:** A service animal is "any dog 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." Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are generally not service animals for the purposes of this definition. A service animal meeting this definition is not required to be licensed or certified by a state or local government or animal training program.
- **Comfort Animal:** An animal that is recommended as necessary by a healthcare or mental health professional to provide emotional support or other assistance for a person with a disability, to alleviate one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. In contrast with a service animal, a comfort animal does not have to be trained to perform a particular task. A comfort animal is not considered a service animal. A comfort animal unlike a service animal may not accompany a person with a disability beyond the residential setting (*e.g.*, to academic buildings,

libraries, dining halls, etc.) without prior authorization from the Accessibility Services Office. The use of a comfort animal in residence halls owned and operated by Russell Sage College ("Campus Residence Hall") and University Heights College Suites ("UHCS") may be allowed as a reasonable accommodation through established Accessibility Services procedures.

- **Pets:** An animal that is neither a service animal nor a comfort animal, as defined above. Per the College's Residence Hall Agreement document, students are not permitted to have non-fish pets in the residence halls. A student may make a request to the Director of Residence Life to keep small fish in a small fish tank in his/her residence hall room with the approval of all roommates.

Request for Service Animal or Comfort Animal

1. Service Animal

For an individual to qualify for having a Service Animal on campus:

- (i) The student must have a disability as defined by the ADA and HRL; and
- (ii) The accompanying animal must be trained to do specific tasks for the qualified individual.

In situations where it is not obvious that the dog is a service animal, staff may ask only two specific questions: (1) is the Service Animal required because of a disability? and (2) what work or task(s) has the Service Animal been trained to perform? Staff are not allowed to request any documentation for the Service Animal, require that the Service Animal demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the student's disability.

Students who require the use of a Service Animal on campus are encouraged to contact the Office of Accessibility Services. The Accessibility Services Office will provide assistance in navigating the campus, including the selection of housing if the student plans to live on campus and arranging for mobility training. Information provided to the Accessibility Services Office is confidential. Disability information will not be released without the signed consent of the student.

This policy only applies to use of a Service Animal on campus. The College does not have control over the use of Service Animals at other locations, including external field placements. If a student has a dispute regarding the use of a Service Animal at another location, the student should notify the Accessibility Services Office as soon as possible. The Accessibility Services Office will attempt to assist with such issue, but ultimately access is controlled by the outside entity.

2. Comfort Animal

If the definition of a Service Animal is not met, then the use of the animal as a Comfort Animal may be allowed as a housing accommodation in a Campus Residence Hall. If a Comfort Animal is required as a housing accommodation in a Campus Residence Hall, the student and treating health care provider must complete the *Russell Sage College Request Form for Accessibility Housing Accommodations* in order to be considered for approval for a Comfort Animal. If a student's disability or need for a Comfort Animal is not readily apparent, the College may request that the student provide confirmation from a licensed healthcare provider that the student has a disability and supporting documentation from a licensed healthcare provider to the Accessibility Services Office.

Documentation from a licensed healthcare or mental health provider should set forth the following:

- a. The credentials of the person completing the form;
- b. The nature of the student's disability;
- c. That the animal is necessary to afford the student an equal opportunity to participate in campus housing and college programs; and
- d. That there is a relationship between the student's disability and the support the animal provides.

The College reserves the right to reject documentation from any provider associated with an internet-based service whereby the availability of documentation for Comfort Animal or other housing accommodations is advertised and such documentation can be purchased on-line.

Responsibilities of Handler:

- Is responsible to attend and be in full control of the Service Animal or Comfort Animal at all times. A Service Animal or Comfort Animal shall have a harness, leash, or other tether unless a) the handler is unable to use a harness, leash or tether, or b) using a harness, leash, or tether will interfere with the animal's ability to safely and effectively perform its duties.
- Is responsible for ensuring that the Service Animal or Comfort Animal is wearing a leash, harness or cape that identifies the animal as a Service Animal or Comfort Animal when on duty anywhere on campus.
- Is responsible for the costs of care necessary for a Service Animal or Comfort Animal's well-being. The arrangements and responsibilities with the care of a Service Animal or Comfort Animal is the sole responsibility of the owner at all times, including regular bathing and grooming, as needed.
- Is responsible for independently removing or arranging for the removal of the Service Animal or Comfort Animal's waste.
- Is responsible for complying applicable laws relating to dog control and licensing laws for animal rights and owner responsibilities. Service Animals or Comfort Animals must be current with immunizations and wear a rabies vaccination tag. Documentation may be required.

- The student who requires the assistance of a Service Animal or Comfort Animal is also personally and solely responsible for any harm or damage that the Service Animal or Comfort Animal causes to a person or property.

Responsibilities of the College Community:

- Must allow Service Animals to accompany their handlers at all times and everywhere on campus where the general public (if accompanying a visitor) or other students (if accompanying a student) are allowed, except for places where there is a health, environmental, or safety hazard. The appropriate way to ascertain that an animal is a Service Animal is to ask (only if it is not apparent) if the animal is required because of a disability and what tasks it has been trained to perform. Specific questions about the individual's disability may not be asked.
- Contact the Accessibility Services Office if any questions or concerns arise relating to Service Animals or Comfort Animals.
- Contact the Accessibility Services Office if faculty/staff have any additional questions regarding visitors to campus who have Service Animals or Comfort Animals.
- Report any Service Animals or Comfort Animals who misbehave or any handlers (or other individuals) who mistreat their Service Animals or Comfort Animals to the Office of Public Safety.

Helpful Information:

What are some basic etiquette rules when around Service Animals or Comfort Animals and their handlers?

- Do NOT pet, touch or otherwise distract a Service Animal or Comfort Animal when it is working. Doing so may interfere with its ability to perform its duties.
- Do NOT feed a Service Animal or Comfort Animal. Their work depends on a regular and consistent feeding regimen that the handler is responsible to maintain.
- Do NOT attempt to separate the handler from the Service Animal or Comfort Animal.
- Do NOT harass or deliberately startle a Service Animal or Comfort Animal.
- Avoid initiating conversations about the student's disability. Some people do not wish to discuss their disability.

Under what circumstances can a Service Animal or Comfort Animal be asked to leave or not allowed participation on campus?

- If a Service Animal or Comfort Animal is found by the College to be out of control and the animal's handler does not take immediate and effective action to control it.
- If the Service Animal or Comfort Animal is not housebroken.

- If a Service Animal or Comfort Animal is physically ill.
- If the Service Animal or Comfort Animal is unreasonably dirty.
- If a Service Animal or Comfort Animal attempts to enter a place on campus where the presence of a Service Animal or Comfort Animal causes danger to the safety of the handler or other students/member of campus.
- If a Service Animal or Comfort Animal attempts to enter any place on campus where a Service Animal or Comfort Animal's safety is compromised.

What needs to happen if a Service Animal or Comfort Animal is behaving aggressively towards their handler or others, or if a handler or other students is behaving aggressively towards a Service Animal or Comfort Animal?

- Report any Service Animals or Comfort Animals who misbehave or any handlers (or others) who mistreat their Service Animals or Comfort Animals to the Office of Public Safety.

What if another student or a faculty or staff member has severe allergies around animal dander?

- With respect to Service Animals, another student's or faculty member's allergies will generally not be a valid reason for excluding the Service Animal from the College's premises. If the presence of the Service Animal creates an access issue for another student with a disability (e.g., life limiting animal allergies), the handler is expected to work with the Office of Accessibility Services to address access concerns in a manner that allows both students to be appropriately accommodated.

What should a handler do if they have concerns about their ability to use a Service Animal or Comfort Animal to access campus facilities and programs?

- Handlers who have concerns about any matter affecting their use of a Service Animal or Comfort Animal should contact the Accessibility Services Office and review the disability accommodation process described and grievance procedure.