



Office of Specialized Services Emotional Support Animal Policy

I. Introduction & Purpose

Ramapo College of New Jersey (the “College”), being mindful of the health and safety concerns of the community, generally limits the presence of privately-owned animals on campus. However, the College is also committed to accommodating students and others with disabilities that require the assistance of service or emotional support animals.

Animals are only allowed on campus when they are providing service or emotional support to a member of the College or guest to campus as a reasonable disability accommodation. This policy applies to those individuals with disabilities who will be accompanied by a emotional support animal while in residence.

No emotional support animal may be kept in College housing at any time prior to the individual receiving approval as a reasonable accommodation pursuant to this Policy.

II. Definitions

Emotional Support Animals:

An emotional support animal is an animal that has been prescribed or otherwise documented by a healthcare or mental health professional to provide emotional support that alleviates one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of the existing disability.

https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=servanimals_ntcfheo2013-01.pdf .

Service Animals:

“Service animals are defined 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, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”)

(https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm)”. For further information on Service Animals, please refer to the Office of Specialized Services (<https://www.ramapo.edu/oss/>).

III. Emotional Support Animals on Campus

Emotional Support Animals may be permitted in campus housing when a student with a disability has registered with the Office of Specialized Services (“OSS”), provided the disability documentation demonstrating the benefits provided by the emotional support animal, and been granted the accommodation of allowing the emotional support animal in residence.

Student use of emotional support animals may be limited to their assigned residence, defined areas of campus and generally will not be permitted in academic or recreational facilities.

IV. Emotional Support Animals in College Housing

Generally speaking, students will be limited to one emotional support animal in order to fulfill the intent of the Fair Housing Act (FHA) requirements in providing support to the student with a mental health disability. Only one emotional support animal will be allowed to reside in each room, suite, or apartment. Not all animals are appropriate for a college campus. Animals may be denied because of age, size, and species.

V. Documentation for an Emotional Support Animal

Before receiving authorization to bring an emotional support animal into College housing, a student must register with OSS and submit a Student Housing Accommodation Request Form. The student must also provide documentation from a reliable third party. The reliable third party needs to complete the Provider Housing Accommodation Request Form as well as the Emotional Support Animal Documentation Form. These forms are available from OSS or on the OSS website. If the reliable third party returns the requested forms without sufficient information for OSS and/or the Housing Accommodation Request Committee to determine whether an accommodation is necessary, OSS will inform the student of the information's insufficiency and may request additional information, including speaking directly with the individual supplying the third-party verification.

The following documentation shall accompany the request for an emotional support animal:

1. An explanation provided by a reliable third party describing the need for the animal, the type of animal, a description of the animal and the animal's name, when the animal was prescribed, the date when the animal was acquired (Emotional Support Animal Documentation forms can be found on the OSS website or at <https://www.ramapo.edu/oss/documentation-requirements/>).
2. Documentation of the student's disability that meets the College's documentation guidelines as maintained by the OSS. Providers of the documentation must complete a Provider Housing Request Form if no academic accommodations are being requested. If academic requests are also being made the Psychological Documentation Form must be completed as well (forms can be found on the OSS website or at <https://www.ramapo.edu/oss/documentation-requirements/>)

Student requests will be reviewed by OSS and/or the Housing Accommodation Request Committee after ALL requested documentation is received. The student will be notified in writing of OSS's decision within 15 business days of OSS having received all requested documentation.

VI. Deadlines:

- Continuing resident students must have completed the affiliation process and had their request for housing accommodation approved by the **March 15th deadline** for the upcoming fall semester and by the **November 1st deadline** for Spring requests.
- First year students must have completed the affiliation process and had their request for housing accommodations approved by the **May 15th deadline** for the upcoming fall semester
- Transfer students must have completed the affiliation process and had their request for housing accommodation approved by **June 15th deadline** for the upcoming fall semester.

Decisions regarding a request for an emotional support animal are generally made by the Housing Accommodation Request Committee. Committee meetings are scheduled based on these deadlines. If the request for accommodations, including all requested paperwork are received after these deadlines the College cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet the student's accommodation needs for the semester it was requested.

VII. Other Considerations....

Ramapo may consider the following factors, among others, as evidence in determining whether the presence of the animal is reasonable or in the making of housing assignments for individuals with emotional support animals.

- a. The size of the animal is too large for the assigned housing space
- b. The animal's presence would force another individual from housing (e.g. serious allergies)
- c. The animal's presence otherwise violates an individual's right to peace and quiet enjoyment
- d. The animal is not housebroken or is unable to live with others in a reasonable manner
- e. The animal's vaccinations are not up-to-date
- f. The animal poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the safety or health of the individual or others such as aggressive behavior towards or injuring the individual or others, or may potential transmit a zoonotic disease
- g. The animal causes or has caused excessive damage to housing beyond reasonable wear and tear

VIII. Residential Guests

Resident students who are requesting a guest pass for an individual with a disability who may be accompanied by an emotional support animal should disclose to Residence Life staff that the guest will be accompanied by an emotional support animal. Students are responsible for assuring that their guests comply with this policy when on campus.

IX. Responsibilities of All Persons with Disabilities Using Emotional Support Animals

1. All emotional support animal owners are responsible for any damage caused by their animal on campus and must take appropriate precautions to prevent property damage or injury. The cost of care, arrangements and responsibility for the well-being of authorized emotional support animals are the sole responsibility of the owner at all times. **Emotional support animals housed in College residences must be crated or caged when left unattended and must not be left unattended for more than a few hours. The length of time that an animal can be left alone depends on the species, breed, age, and temperament of the animal. Emotional Support Animals may not be left overnight in College Housing to be cared for by any individual other than the owner. Emotional support animal owners are expected to stay with their animals overnight.** Animals may not be left unattended in parked cars or tied or chained to poles, fences, etc. on campus. The College reserves the right to inspect the enclosure to be used in containing the animal.
2. In order to be present on campus, emotional support animals must:
 - A. **Be in Good Health:** The animal must have a clean bill of health provided by their veterinarian. As well as complete all requirements for the presence of animals in public places (vaccinations, licensure, ID tags, etc.) mandated by state or local ordinances. Including but not limited to:

Licensing: The animal must meet licensing requirements and wear tags.
Students authorized to bring emotional support animals to campus must provide

documentation of licensing on an annual basis. Records of such are to be maintained by OSS.

B. Be Under Control of the Owner: The animal must be under full control of the owner at all times. Reasonable behavior is expected from all emotional support animals while on campus. If an animal exhibits unacceptable behavior, the owner is expected to employ appropriate training techniques to correct the situation. In addition:

- 1) When outside of the owner's residence, the animal must be on a leash or caged at all times. It should never be permitted to wander the campus off leash even when accompanied by the owner.
- 2) The animal must be as unobtrusive as possible when in the presence of other members of the College community.
- 3) Animals must be house-trained or confined to an appropriate enclosure. The College reserves the right to inspect the enclosure to be used in containing the animal.
- 4) Emotional support animals are prohibited from kitchens and food preparation areas except those in apartment residence facilities.
- 5) *Consequences for misbehavior:* The emotional support animal is held to the conduct and etiquette stated in this policy. The owner is fully responsible for all actions of the emotional support animal. When an emotional support animal is determined to be out of control or otherwise in violation of this policy, the College will take appropriate action to protect the health and safety of its community members. Consequences for animal misconduct may include, but are not limited to, muzzling a barking dog, refresher training for the animal and its handler, or removal from College facilities. If the actions of the animal result in a violation of the College Code of Conduct, the owner may be charged accordingly.

C. Cleanliness: The animal must not be bathed or its cage/crate or bedding be cleaned using student housing or College facilities.

The owner's accommodations may also be inspected for fleas, ticks or other pests as necessary. If fleas, ticks or other pests are detected through inspection, the residence will be treated using approved fumigation methods by a College approved pest control service. The owner will be billed for the expense of any pest treatment above and beyond standard pest management in the residence halls. The College shall have the right to bill the owner's account for unmet obligations under this provision.

D. Properly Dispose of Animal Waste: The owner must follow local clean up ordinances when the animal defecates. Individuals with disabilities who physically cannot clean up after their own emotional support animal are still responsible for ensuring that the animal's waste is disposed of properly.

The College's Office of Environmental Health and Safety has developed a policy for the proper disposal of pet solid waste, which applies to emotional support animals. The complete policy can be found at the following webpage:
<https://www.ramapo.edu/ehs/files/2013/05/5-9.pdf>

X. Continuing Responsibility of Students using Emotional Support Animals on Campus

If the request to have an emotional support animal on campus is approved, the requesting student must register the emotional support animal with OSS prior to the animal being brought to campus. Registration requires the following:

1. Be prepared to provide updated documentation showing the continued need for the emotional support animal.
2. At the start of each academic year, provide documentation to OSS showing proof that the emotional support animal has been licensed, if necessary, in accordance with local ordinances and in good health.
3. Provide written documentation from all roommates/suitemates stating that they are agreeable to living with an animal in residence.
4. Provide a written statement from and an off-campus individual stating that they are willing to take immediate responsibility for the animal in the event that you should become unable to care for it.
5. Provide a written statement from an on-campus individual willing to take responsibility for the animal in the event you should become unable to care for it.
6. Review and sign appropriate forms and agreements at the start of each academic year.
7. Be able to produce, upon request from College personnel, the Animal Authorization Card signed by the Dean of Students.
8. Post outside of residence the "Emotional Support Animal in Residence" sign provided.

College personnel shall not be required to provide care or food for any emotional support animal including, but not limited to, removing the animal during an emergency evacuation. Emergency personnel will determine whether to remove the animal and may not be held responsible for care, damage to, or loss of the animal.

XI. Conflicting Needs

It is common for persons to have a condition that precipitates an allergic reaction to animals. If there is an allergy/animal conflict within a residence hall that cannot be resolved between the two parties, then the Office of Residence Life and OSS will collaborate to reach a solution. It should be noted that if the first person that has been placed into the residence hall uses an authorized support animal and another person with severe allergies then arrives, the first person would generally not be required to vacate College housing to accommodate the second person.

Persons (including College faculty or staff) who have asthma/allergy/medical issues when in prolonged close proximity with an authorized emotional support animal on campus are to be directed to make this known to OSS. The person making the complaint must provide verifiable medical documentation to support his/her claim. Action will be taken to consider the needs of both persons to resolve the problem.

XII. Damages

The owner is responsible for all damages that the emotional support animal may cause while on

campus. If a student's emotional support animal causes damage to College property, the cost of the damage will be assessed and charged to the student's bill.

XIII. Removal of Emotional Support Animals from Campus

In cases of imminent danger or threat to the emotional support animal or others, the College's Public Safety Officers or On-Call Administrators may order the immediate removal of an emotional support animal. Non-emergency removals may be authorized by the Dean of Students or his/her designee. In such cases, the owner will be notified in writing that the emotional support animal must be removed, including the reasons for removal.

An emotional support animal may be ordered removed from campus and may be prohibited from the Residence Halls for the following reasons:

1. **Disruption**: An owner may be directed to remove an emotional support animal from campus when the animal is unruly or disruptive (e.g. barking, snapping, running around, bringing attention to itself, jumping up on people, escaping from cage or leash). If the improper behavior happens repeatedly, the owner may be prohibited from bringing the animal to the residence until the owner can demonstrate that s/he has taken significant steps to mitigate the behavior. Any animal that exhibits aggressive or unsafe behavior may be prohibited from College facilities.
2. **Threatening behavior**: A emotional support animal may be excluded from the campus when that animal's behavior or condition poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others including other emotional support animals.
3. **Ill health**: Emotional support animals that are ill should not be taken into public or common areas on campus. An owner with an ill emotional support animal may be asked to remove the animal from College facilities.
4. **Uncleanliness**: Owners must ensure that their emotional support animal is kept in sanitary conditions, and are clean and well-groomed. An owner of an animal whose condition is excessively unclean or unsanitary (e.g., flea infested, foul-smelling and/or shedding excessively, urinating or defecating inappropriately) may be asked to remove the animal from College facilities.
6. **Damage to property**: Emotional support animals that cause substantial damage to College property or to the property of other students may be removed from campus.

Should the emotional support animal be removed from campus for any reason, the student is expected to fulfill his/her housing obligation for the remainder of the housing contract.

If it is determined that an emotional support animal must be removed from campus, the student has 12 hours to remove the animal. If the animal is not removed from the Residence Hall within this time frame the College may have the animal removed to the nearest, appropriate animal shelter. Additionally, failure to comply with the order for removal will result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct for consideration of sanctions.

Should an owner's emotional support animal be ordered removed from campus and prohibited for any reason, OSS may afford the owner the option of replacing the emotional support animal or continuing to attend the College with other reasonable accommodations but without an emotional support animal in residence.

XIV. Public Etiquette by the Emotional Support Animal

The College has an obligation to ensure the safety of all of its employees and students as well as to take the necessary steps to eliminate any undue interruption of the educational process and overall operation of the College. Therefore, when in common areas in residence, emotional support animals:

1. Must not be allowed to sniff people or the personal belongings of others.
2. Must not initiate contact with someone without that individual's direct permission.
3. Must not display any behaviors or noises that are disruptive to others, such as barking, whining, or growling; scratching doors or chewing on furniture or personal belongings of others.
4. Must avoid excessive personal grooming in public settings.
5. Must not block an aisle or passageway.
6. Must be trained not to be attracted to food that may be in common areas.
7. Be housetrained

An owner may be issued a verbal or written warning by College staff whenever an emotional support animal exhibits poor etiquette on campus. Such warnings will be documented on a Public Safety Incident Report or report filed by a Residence Life Staff member, depending upon the circumstances surrounding the behavior. All such reports will be sent to the Dean of Students. Following an etiquette warning, the owner is expected to take action to train the animal to prevent re-occurrence of the offending behavior. If etiquette warnings for animal misconduct are repeatedly issued to an owner, the emotional support animal may be ordered removed from College facilities, or the owner may be subject to disciplinary action under the Student Code of Conduct.

XV. Appeal Procedures

A decision to deny approval of an emotional support animal or to remove a previously approved emotional support animal as well as a student with a disability believing they have been discriminated against because of their disability, may be appealed in writing to the Office of Affirmative Action and Workplace Compliance.

Appeals must state a specific reason(s) for why the owner believes the request should be reconsidered. The College officials may consider records and information relevant to the owner's appeal, whether submitted by the owner or obtained from any College office or staff person, including OSS and the Public Safety Office. A decision on emotional support animal appeals shall be issued by the Office of Affirmative Action and Workplace Compliance in writing and shall be the final administrative action of the College.

XVI. Modification and Enforcement

The College reserves the right to amend and enforce this policy at its discretion.

Contacts

Office of Affirmative Action and Workplace Compliance: Kat McGee, Director, Title IX Coordinator, kmcgee@ramapo.edu

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