



# Service Animals

Department of Supportive Programs and Services (DSP&S)

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## What is an Emotional Support Animal?

- People who use an animal that calms them, but is not trained to perform a specific task or service, are using an **Emotional Support Animal (ESA)**. Examples of this include: “I use the dog to relieve my anxiety”, “He calms me down”, “She helps my depression”, “When I pet her, I feel better”.
- These animals are good natured and calm their handlers just by existing. They do not do work or tasks.
- ESAs can be almost any type of animal (lizards, cats, etc).
- Student using this type of animal **must** visit the DSPS and go through the interactive process to see if the ESA is actually a service animal.
- Employees requesting an ESA in the workplace (employees of the college, or student workers), should go through their direct supervisors or HR to determine whether an ESA is appropriate.

## How is this different from a Service Animal?

- Service animals are also used for a disability, but are trained to do specific work or tasks.
- Service animals can **only** be dogs or miniature horses.
- The use of a service animal is not an accommodation; it is a right under Federal Law. Therefore, people using service animals **do not have to request an accommodation**.
- Students using service animals may or may not have a letter or accommodation form mentioning their animals.
- Service animals in training are afforded the same rights as service animals.
- There is no official proof of certification or paperwork for a service animal.

## What about a “Therapy Animal”?

- Sometimes, you will hear the term **therapy animal**. Therapy animals are certified to have a certain temperament so that they can visit daycares, nursing homes, and hospitals to cheer people up or calm them down.
- Sometimes an animal can have two jobs—it can be both a therapy animal, as well as an ESA, or service animal.

## How do I know which is which?

Legally, when encountering a person (employee, community member, student) with a dog on campus, only two questions can be asked:

- “Is the dog required because of a disability?”
- “What work or task is the dog trained to perform?”

If the person indicates that the dog or horse is used for a disability and the person can name specific tasks or work that the dog or horse does (interrupting behavior, cueing changes in body chemistry, carrying, guiding, signaling migraines, detecting allergens, etc) then it is a service animal and protected by law. **We cannot ask additional questions, require paperwork, proof of certification, or a vest.**

## Service Animal Etiquette

1. Avoid petting or feeding the animal. They are working animals.
2. Do not separate the animal from the handler.
3. Do not startle the animal.
4. Never ask about a person's disability.

## What if other people complain or are allergic?

1. Dialog with the parties involved often solves this problem. Seating at opposite ends of the classroom or workplace is usually a viable option. Please contact the DSPS or HR if this cannot be resolved.
2. Fear or discomfort around dogs is usually alleviated after noticing that the animal is virtually un-noticeable—which is the case if it is a legitimate service animal.

## Other information

- You can ask that an animal be removed if it is out of control, barking, growling, causing disruption, making a mess, or is being destructive in any way. Please call Campus Safety as needed.
- The handler is responsible for clean-up and maintaining control of the animal and most service animals blend in and keep a low-profile. Most service animals are highly trained and perform a very valuable service to people who need them and will assist the student in fully participating in their education.
- Dog licenses and vaccinations are required under county law, and DSPS or HR would collect this information for a service animal.
- Speaking to the handler about any concerns you may have is a good way to head off any misconceptions or problems you anticipate. **Please contact Michelle Peters, Director of the DSPS at [mpeters@hartnell.edu](mailto:mpeters@hartnell.edu) if you have any questions about what to say or any concerns.**