

Policy Name: Service and Assistance Animal Policy

Policy Owner: Equal Opportunity, Compliance, and Conflict Management

Policy Contact: J. Denise Johnson-Marshall, Ed.D, Director, Equal Opportunity and ADA Compliance – Institute ADA Coordinator, dmarshall@gatech.edu

Reviewed By: Office of the General Counsel, Office of Disability Services, Housing and Residence Life, GTPD, Academic Administration – Education & Learning, Dining Services, EH&S Lab Services, Transportation Services, Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation, Dean of Students Office, Registrar's Office, Building and Facility Manager Representatives

Policy Steering Committee Approval: May 2025

Policy Purpose: The Service and Assistance Animal Policy outlines the rights and responsibilities related to the presence of animals assisting individuals with disabilities at Georgia Tech. It ensures compliance with federal and state laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Fair Housing Act (FHA). It promotes equal access to Institute programs, services, and activities. This policy clarifies the permitted use of Service Animals, Service Animals in Training, and Assistance Animals (including Emotional Support Animals) and provides guidance on behavior expectations, handler responsibilities, and procedures for removal and appeals.

Summary of Substantive Policy Elements:

- Defines Service Animals, Service Animals in Training, and Assistance Animals
- Outlines handler responsibilities and animal behavior expectations
- Specifies areas where animals are permitted or restricted
- Details procedures for the removal of animals and appeal rights
- Addresses conflicting disabilities and emergency response protocols
- Provides documentation requirements and health standards for Assistance Animals
- Aligns with ADA, FHA, and USG policies



Georgia Institute of Technology

Service and Assistance Animal Policy

Type of Policy: Administrative

Effective Date: TBD

Last Revised: TBD

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1. Reason for Policy

The Georgia Institute of Technology ("Georgia Tech") is dedicated to fostering an inclusive, equitable, and respectful learning and working environment for all, including individuals with disabilities. To that end, and in compliance with federal and state laws, this policy ("Policy") outlines requirements and permitted uses of animals assisting individuals with disabilities. This Policy does not pertain to animals being used for teaching or research.

2. Policy Statement

This Policy serves to promote equal access to programs, services, facilities, and transportation as it relates to the permitted use of animals assisting individuals with disabilities.

General Rules

Georgia Tech recognizes animals assisting individuals with disabilities in the following categories: Service Animals as defined under the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) as amended; Service Animals in Training as defined in Georgia state law; and Assistance Animals, which includes Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) allowed under the [Fair Housing Act](#) in Georgia Tech Residential Facilities.

General Rules in this section apply to all Service and Assistance Animals unless otherwise noted.

Prohibited Areas

The Institute permits Service Animals to accompany Handlers at all times on Institute grounds or facilities, with exceptions in areas where animals are specifically prohibited due to safety or health concerns, potential danger to the animal, or risk of

compromising research integrity. Requests for exceptions in restricted areas should be made on a case-by-case basis. Students seeking exceptions should contact the [Office of Disability Services](#), while employees should contact [Equal Opportunity, Compliance, and Conflict Management](#).

Assistance Animals are restricted to Housing Facilities unless permission is granted by facility management as a reasonable accommodation.

Responsibilities of Handlers

Handlers are responsible for any damage or injuries caused by their animals and must take appropriate precautions to prevent property damage or injury. The cost of care, arrangements, and responsibilities for the well-being of a Service Animal or Assistance Animal is the sole responsibility of the Handler at all times.

Animal Behavior

The Handler should maintain full control over the animal and to the extent possible, the Handler should ensure that the animal does not:

- Sniff people, furniture, or the personal belongings of others
- Display any behaviors or noises that are disruptive to others, unless it is part of the service being provided to the Handler
- Block an aisle or passageway for emergency egress
- Bark uncontrollably
- Jump on other people
- Run away from the Handler

When outside the residence, Assistance Animals must be contained in an animal carrier or controlled by a leash or harness. When inside the residence, the Assistance Animal should always remain under the dominion and control of the Handler. Assistance Animals must not be left unsupervised for extended periods. If the Handler is away overnight, the Assistance Animal must accompany them.

Waste Removal

Cleaning up after the animal is the sole responsibility of the Handler. In the event that the Handler is not physically able to clean-up after the animal, it is the responsibility of the Handler to make the necessary provisions to clean up after the animal.

Conflicting Disabilities

If students and employees have allergic reactions or other conditions to animals that are substantial enough to qualify as a disability, then Georgia Tech will consider the needs of both persons in meeting its obligations to reasonably accommodate all disabilities, and to resolve the problem as efficiently and expeditiously as possible. For a resolution, students requesting accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Services and employees requesting accommodations should contact the

Office of Equal Opportunity, Compliance, and Conflict Management. If this process does not yield a resolution, then the parties should contact the Institute ADA Coordinator.

Emergency Response

In the event of a fire drill or emergency evacuation, assistance animals should remain under the Handler's control or contained within the residence. Emergency personnel will not be responsible for the removal of assistance animals during an evacuation but will determine whether to remove the animal, if necessary, based on the situation. Handlers are encouraged to consider the effect of alarms on their animals and make appropriate preparations for these events.

Service Animals

The Institute welcomes Service Animals in its facilities, including recreational facilities, activities, programs, transportation, and events when accompanied by:

- An individual with a disability for whom the Service Animal is trained to provide, and does provide, a specific service to them that is directly related to their disability, or
- An individual who is training the animal on tasks related to a disability with the intent of becoming a fully trained Service Animal.

Inquiries Regarding Service Animals

Georgia Tech employees may only ask two questions to determine whether an animal qualifies as a Service Animal. Georgia Tech employees may ask:

- If the animal is required because of a disability and,
- What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

In compliance with federal law, Georgia Tech employees cannot require documentation, such as proof that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a Service Animal. Generally, Georgia Tech employees may not make any inquiries about a Service Animal when it is readily apparent that an animal is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability (e.g., a dog observed guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling a person's wheelchair, or providing assistance with stability or balance to an individual with an observable mobility disability).

Service Animal Control Requirement

- The animal should always be on a leash unless providing a service to the Handler requires the animal to be unleashed.
- The animal should be capable of always responding to voice or hand commands, and the Handler should be in full control of the animal at all times.
- To the extent possible, the animal should be unobtrusive to other individuals and their respective learning, living, and working environments.

Service Animals in Training

Under Georgia Code § 30-4-2 only dogs can be trained as Service Animals and have the same rights as a fully trained Service Animal when accompanied by a trainer and are identified as such in any place of public accommodation.

The trainer must:

- Have the animal on a leash and have the dog under their control.
- Have on their person and available for inspection credentials from an accredited school for which the animal is being trained
- Have a collar, leash, or other appropriate attire identifying the animal as a Service Animal in training.

Trainers of Service Animals in training must also adhere to the requirements for Service Animals and are subject to the removal policies as outlined in this policy.

Removal of Service Animals

On rare occasions, Service Animals may be removed for the following reasons:

- Out of Control Animal: A Handler may be directed to remove an animal that is out of control if the Handler does not take effective action to control it. If improper animal behavior happens repeatedly, the Handler may be prohibited from bringing the animal into any Georgia Tech facility in the future until the Handler can demonstrate that the Handler has taken significant steps to mitigate the behavior. (See examples of unacceptable behavior under section I.B.1 Animal Behavior.)
- Non-Housebroken Animal: A Handler may be directed to remove an animal that is not Housebroken. Occasional accidents do not meet this qualification.
- Direct Threat: A Handler may be directed to remove an animal that Georgia Tech determines to be a substantial and direct threat to the health and safety of individuals. This may occur as a result of a very ill animal, a substantial lack of cleanliness of the animal, or the presence of an animal in a sensitive area like a medical facility, certain laboratories, or mechanical or industrial areas.

Where a Service Animal is properly removed pursuant to this policy, Georgia Tech will work with the Handler to determine reasonable alternative opportunities to participate in the service, program, or activity without having the Service Animal on the premises.

Appeals for Service Animals

Any person dissatisfied with a decision concerning a Service Animal may appeal through [the Office of Equal Opportunity, Compliance, and Conflict Management](#).

Assistance Animals (See Definitions Below)

All University System of Georgia (USG) institutions with Campus Housing must permit Assistance Animals in housing as a reasonable accommodation for residents (students

or employees) with disabilities who meet the legal requirements for an Assistance Animal under the Fair Housing Act (FHA), 42 U.S.C.A. § 3604(f), which is enforced by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Inquiries about Assistance Animals

All inquiries about Assistance Animals in residence as an accommodation should be made directly to [The Office of Disability Services](#). For the current procedure on ESAs please see the [Housing and Residence Life website](#).

Required Disability Information

An individual requesting to bring an Assistance Animal into Campus Housing must provide written documentation that shows all of the following as stated in the [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Guidance issued on January 28, 2020, page 17](#):

- The individual's name.
- A statement confirming that the health care provider has a professional relationship with the individual.
- Information demonstrating that the individual has a disability, as defined by the Fair Housing Act.
- Information showing that the impairment substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- A description of the animal and how it will assist in alleviating a symptom or effect of the disability.

Generic online certifications without a genuine health consultation may not be sufficient. The Institution shall consistently evaluate the documentation presented.

Assessing the Reasonableness of Assistance Animals

In determining whether a specific animal is a reasonable accommodation, Georgia Tech will consider whether the animal is appropriate based on [HUD Guidance Published January 12, 2020 page 12 Types of Animals](#). If an Assistance Animal is deemed unreasonable, Georgia Tech will engage in the interactive process with the individual to explore alternative accommodations.

Health and Wellness Requirements

Assistance Animals must be Housebroken, spayed or neutered, and in good health, including regular veterinary care. Proof of vaccinations and a clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian must be provided before the animal is permitted in Campus Housing, and an updated health report may be required annually. The Handler must maintain a clean living environment and promptly dispose of waste. The Handler is responsible for ensuring that the living area is kept free of odors, fleas, and other pests caused by the animal. Georgia Tech reserves the right to conduct periodic inspections to ensure compliance with these health standards.

Types of Animals

In general, only domesticated animals commonly kept in households can serve as Assistance Animals. Although it is possible that an “exotic species” could qualify as an Assistance Animal, the individual seeking accommodation has a substantial burden to demonstrate a disability-related need for the specific exotic animal or the specific type of exotic animal.

Removal of Assistance Animal

Georgia Tech may require the removal of an Assistance Animal if:

- The animal is out of control, and the Handler does not take effective action to control it.
- The animal is not Housebroken.
- The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, or its presence results in significant property damage.
- The Handler fails to comply with health or sanitation requirements.

Removals are determined by the behavior of the particular animal, on a case-by-case basis, and in consultation with Housing and Residence Life, the responsible resident, and other parties as appropriate.

When removal is necessary, the Handler will be notified by Housing and Residence Life in writing that removal of the Assistance Animal is required and given a specified, reasonable amount of time to make alternative arrangements for the Assistance Animal to be removed. If the Handler fails to remove the Assistance Animal within the designated time frame, the Institute has the right to remove the animal and relinquish it to a local animal shelter. The Handler must be allowed to contest removal determinations through an appeal process and should be notified of that right when such determinations are made.

3. Scope

The Service and Assistance Animal Policy applies to all Georgia Tech students, employees, and visitors using Institute-owned and operated facilities and transportation services.

4. Definitions

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including employment, education, transportation, and all public and private institutions that are open to the general public.
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Assistance Animals	<p>Assistance Animals are also known as Emotional Support Animals (ESAs), comfort, or support animals.</p> <p>Any animal that provides emotional support or alleviates one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. An Assistance Animal does not require specialized training and is not species-specific. Generally, only domesticated animals that are commonly kept in households are eligible to serve as Assistance Animals. Assistance Animals must meet the definition outlined in the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and are only allowed as an accommodation within Institute Housing.</p>
Fair Housing Act (FHA)	The FHA is a federal law that prohibits discrimination in leasing or purchasing a dwelling, obtaining financing, seeking housing assistance, or engaging in other housing-related activities.
Handler	A Handler is a person responsible for the care, handling, and control of a Service or Assistance Animal which may include either a person with a disability or a personal care attendant.
Housebroken	A Housebroken animal is trained to defecate and urinate outdoors or in a designated place indoors so that the animal can live in a Residential Facility.
Residential Facility (Campus Housing)	Campus housing is a "qualifying dwelling" under the FHA and includes student or employee-occupied dormitories/residence halls, suites, institute-operated apartments, Fraternity and Sorority housing, and any other place of residence on campus.
Service Animal	<p>A Service Animal is any dog* 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, that meets the definition of "Service Animal" under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations at 28 CFR 35.104. The work or tasks performed must be directly related to the individual's disability.</p> <p>*Under particular circumstances set forth in the ADA regulations at 28 CFR 35.136(i), a miniature horse may qualify as a Service Animal.</p>
Service Animals in Training	Service Animals in Training are dogs that are being trained by a trainer identified as an agent or employee of an entity specialized in training dogs to become Service Animals. These animals will be held to the same requirements as Service Animals.

Trainer	A Trainer is a person engaged in the training of a Service Animal for the purpose of accompanying a Handler.
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5. Responsibilities

Office of Disability Services

The Office of Disability Services is responsible for receiving and reviewing documentation for Assistance Animals, accommodation requests for conflicting disabilities, and requests for Service Animals in restricted areas for students.

Housing and Residence Life

Housing and Residence Life is responsible for processing removal and appeals related to Assistance Animals and protocols and practices of Assistance Animals in the residential environment.

Office of Equal Opportunity, Compliance, and Conflict Management

Responsible for accommodations for conflicting disabilities and processing requests for Service Animals in restricted areas for employees.

6. Enforcement

Violations of this policy may be enforced as follows:

- Service Animals and Assistance Animals the animal may be removed as outlined in this policy.
- Repeated violations may be reported to the Office of Student Integrity and/or Office of Human Resources
- Visitors who fail to adhere to this policy may be asked to leave Georgia Tech property.

Refusal of access in violation of this policy will be enforced through the USG's Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy and Georgia Tech's Equal Opportunity, Nondiscrimination, and Anti-Harassment Policy.

Reports of discrimination based on disability can be submitted to Equal Opportunity Compliance and Conflict Management - ADA online at:

https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?GeorgiaTech=&layout_id=2.

7. Related Information

Resource	Link
ADA Requirements: Service Animals	https://www.ada.gov/resources/service-animals-2010-requirements/

USG Non-discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy	https://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section6/C2654
Georgia Tech Equal Opportunity, Nondiscrimination, and Anti-Harassment Policy	https://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/employment/equal-opportunity-nondiscrimination-and-anti-harassment-policy

8. Policy History

Revision Date	Author	Description
TBD	Equal Opportunity, Compliance, and Conflict Management	New Policy

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