

## Service Animal Policy

Updated: August 8, 2022

Siena College is committed to compliance with applicable state and federal laws relating to individuals with disabilities. Only service animals, as defined by the American's with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act are allowed in the general campus facilities. Siena College recognizes and supports the assistance that a trained service animal can provide a student or an employee with a disability.

### Definitions

**Accommodation:** A modification or adjustment in policies, procedures, or work/housing/school environment to enable a student to partake in equal opportunities and access to College benefits and services based on a documented disability.

**Assistance Animal:** This is the umbrella term that encompasses service animals and emotional support animals. Service animals and emotional support animals are not pets; they are animals that provide assistance, perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, or provide emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptom or effects of a person's disability.

**Service Animal:** An animal that is individually trained (or in the process of being trained) to do work or perform specific tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. The work or tasks performed by the service animal must be directly related to the person's disability. Examples of a Service Animal includes but is not limited to:

- A dog that is trained to serve as a travel tool for individuals who are blind or have impaired vision.
- A dog that has been trained to alert deaf persons or those with significant hearing loss, to sounds such as knocks on doors, fire alarms, phone ringing, etc.
- A dog that has been trained to assist a person with a mobility or health impairment. Duties include carrying, fetching, opening doors, ringing doorbells, activating elevator buttons, steadying a person while walking, assisting a person to get up after a fall, etc.
- A dog trained to assist persons with seizure disorders. Some dogs are trained to predict seizures and provide advance warning.

**Emotional Support Animal (ESA):** An animal that provides emotional support to alleviate one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. Some, but not all, animals that assist persons with disabilities are professionally trained.

**Individual with a disability:** For the purpose of this policy, an individual with a disability is defined as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

The care and supervision of the service animal is the responsibility of the handler. The College will identify safe areas to allow for basic needs of the animal. The animal must have a harness, leash, or other tether unless the handler is unable to use such equipment or it would interfere with the animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the animal must be otherwise supervised (e.g., voice control, signals, etc.). The service animal will be viewed by the campus as an extension of the individual student or employee and therefore subject to the code of conduct of the College in the case of the student and the applicable governing policies in the case of an employee.

### **Service Animal Accommodation Request Process**

1. The Office of Accessibility should be informed of any individual, student or employee, if an individual plans to or has a service animal on campus and recommends registering with the Office of Accessibility.
2. If the animal is residing on campus it is the owners/handlers responsibility to comply with the Town of Colonie's licensing policy. Requirements include current vaccination against rabies at the time of application. Students will be expected to apply for a license with the Town of Colonie even if the animal is registered with another municipality. There is no fee associated with this process for a service animal.
3. The animal should be in good health, well-groomed and care should be taken for flea and odor control. Consideration of others should be taken when providing maintenance and hygiene of the animal.
4. A student may generally only request one (1) service animal for accompaniment. If you need more than one service animal, please contact the Office of Accessibility.
5. The service animal must have all appropriate vaccinations (i.e. rabies shots) and provide documentation of the vaccinations. Updated vaccinations are required to be submitted upon expiration.
6. Requests for a service animal must be made each academic year. Prior approval does not guarantee future approval. For disabilities that are obvious and/or visible, it is not necessary for you to request approval. However, it is advised that you register your service animal with the Office of Disability Services to avoid mis-identification or other problems.
7. While not required, the service animal may wear a vest identifying they are working animal. However, an animal that is not a service animal may not wear a vest, collar or similar accessory identifying it as a service animal.

### **Steps to Request a Service Animal**

1. Register with the Office of Accessibility. Please see our [How to Register Guide](#).
2. Student may choose to submit documentation to help The Office of Accessibility to better understand the student's needs.
3. Veterinarian confirmation that all appropriate vaccinations, including rabies and distemper, have been administered and are up-to-date. Appropriate animal licensure is also required.
4. The Service Animal Emergency Contact Agreement must be signed and submitted to the Office of Accessibility.
5. Once the request and documentation are submitted, the Office of Accessibility will reach out to the student to schedule a meeting to discuss the request, the Service Animal Policy, and the Service Animal Agreement.

The Office of Accessibility will approve or deny the request for a service animal and notify the appropriate parties of the decision within five business days.

An animal will be approved if the student provides sufficient response to the questions below.

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

Reasons that a request for a service animal may be denied include, but are not limited to:

The service animal would cause substantial physical damage to the property of others.  
The service animal is disruptive (e.g. excessive or uncontrolled barking).

## **Student Responsibilities**

1. The student will be solely responsible for the care of the service animal. The service animal must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered at all times when outside the student's room/residence or on campus, unless such devices interfere with the service animals' work or tasks.
2. It is expected that service animals be walked outside to relieve themselves. The student will take appropriate measures to ensure that their service animal will defecate or urinate only in designated areas outside of the building. The student must "pick-up" after the service animal at all times, and animal waste should be disposed of properly.
3. The student is expected to be aware of certain health and safety restrictions in specific areas, where the service animal might be in danger. Restricted areas may include but are not limited to: food preparation areas, research laboratories, and other areas prohibited by law.
4. Student will be solely responsible for any and all damage done to College property by the service animal.
5. Conflicts between service animals and other individuals with severe allergies, phobias, etc., will be addressed on a case-by-case basis (e.g. relocation to another room or residence hall). Persons who have asthma/allergy/or a medical reaction to the animal are directed to make their complaint to the appropriate offices (Office of Accessibility for student complaints and the Office of Human Resources for employee complaints). The person making the complaint must provide verifiable medical documentation to support their claim. In consultation with the Director of Health Services, action will be taken to consider the needs of both persons to resolve the problem as efficiently and effectively as possible. In residential spaces, Community Living staff has the right to reassign the student if care of the service animal or interactions with others becomes a concern.
6. To the extent possible, the service animal should be unobtrusive and not disruptive. If the service animal becomes disruptive, the student must take prompt and effective action to control that behavior.
7. Students must meet with the Director of the Office of Accessibility (or their designee) monthly to ensure the policy is being followed and accommodations are appropriately in place.
8. It is the student's responsibility to inform roommates/ suitemates of the service animal including professors if the student is bringing the Service Animal to class.
9. There will be an "Animal Working" marker on the door of their specific room/ suite/ house letting the Community Living staff and community members know there is a working animal inside the room.

10. Service animals must leave campus with the student anytime the student leaves overnight and/or during College breaks.
11. Student will provide an emergency contact in case the student is unable to care for the animal. The emergency contact will be notified to come remove the animal from campus until the student is back on campus and is able to care for their animal. The emergency contact will sign and submit the Service Animal Emergency Contact Agreement

## **Complaints**

If there is any complaint regarding the animal and its behavior, Public Safety, the Vice President for Student Life, or designee, or the Office of Human Resources (in the case of an employee), should contact the student or staff member and, in collaboration with the Office of Accessibility Director, inform the student or employee of the policies regarding service animals.

## **Violations of the Service Animal Policy and Agreement**

After the first offense, the student will be required to meet with a staff member from the Office of Accessibility. If no corrections are made to the animal's behavior, the College has the right to remove the service animal for violations of the Service Animal Policy and Service Animal Agreement. The College reserves the right to remove the service animal after one incident if the behavior is egregious.

*Out-of-control Behavior:* A student may be directed to remove a service animal that is unruly or disruptive (e.g. barking excessively, running around, jumping onto people, exhibiting aggressive behavior, damaging property, etc.) and the student is unable to take effective action to control the service animal. Repeated instances of such behavior may result in exclusion from College facilities until the student is able to demonstrate effective control of the service animal.

*Unkempt Animal:* Service animals must be housebroken. The presence of the service animal may not pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others. A student must also ensure that the service animal is kept clean and well-groomed. A service animal that is excessively unclean (e.g. repeated soiling of facilities, flea-infested, foul-smelling and/or shedding excessively) may be excluded from College facilities. Although a service animal may become ill unexpectedly, the College recommends that a sick service animal should not be brought into College facilities.

*Misrepresented documentation:* If it is determined that documentation provided by the student misrepresented any material facts, the service animal may be barred from College facilities.

*Violating Agreement:* If any provision of this policy or the related Service Animal Agreement is violated, the student may be required to immediately remove the service animal from College facilities.