

Comfort Support Animal Procedures

Any resident student requesting to have an emotional support animal (also known as a comfort animal) in on-campus housing is responsible for knowing and adhering to the policy and procedures described in the St. Mary's College of Maryland Animals on Campus Policy found in To the Point as well as this document.

To begin the process, the student must self-disclose to the Office of Accessibility Services through the online public intake form. The student will also need to work with their provider to obtain appropriate third-party documentation. This documentation should indicate therapeutic benefits for the student in residence. For more detailed information, please refer to the documentation guidelines for an accommodation request: [SMCM Documentation Guidelines for Accessibility Eligibility](#)

No comfort animal will be permitted in SMCM housing that:

- Is not approved by the Office of Accessibility Services
- Poses a direct threat to the health, safety, or well-being of others
- Would pose an undue financial and/or administrative burden to SMCM
- Would fundamentally alter the nature of SMCM's housing operations.

Once the student's letter of accommodation has reached the Office of Residence Life (ORL) the student must submit the Comfort Animal Registration Form, Veterinarian Verification Form along with any other required documentation for final approval. All approved comfort animals must comply with applicable laws regarding animals and their treatment and care. Students must submit the forms above 30 days prior to the intended arrival date of the animal on campus.

Animal Standards:

Dogs:

- All required immunizations must be up-to-date.
- A copy of the immunizations must be on file with the ORL.
- You must obtain a dog license from either St. Mary's County or county of permanent residence (in order to comply with local St. Mary's County ordinance)
- Dogs must be spayed or neutered prior to arrival.
- A copy of the veterinarian's report must be on file with the ORL.
- Dogs must be housebroken.
- Collars and tags must be worn and visible at all times.

- The dog must be under control (leashed) at all times when outside the resident's room/suite/apartment/townhouse.
- Dogs must never be allowed to run off-leash. Dogs must be under control at all times when outside in outdoor common spaces
- Dogs are only allowed in assigned residential dwelling of the owner
- Dogs must possess friendly and sociable characteristics
- Dogs must not pose a direct threat to others on campus
- A specific dog can be restricted from the premises by the Director of Residence Life based on any confirmed threatening or territorial behavior
- Dog obedience and training programs are highly recommended

Domestic Cats:

- All required immunizations must be up-to-date
- A copy of the immunizations must be on file with the ORL
- Cats must be spayed or neutered prior to arrival to campus.
- A copy of the veterinarian's report must be on file with the ORL.
- Collars and tags must be worn and visible at all times.
- Cats must never be allowed to run off-leash. Cats must be under control at all times when outside the resident's room/suite/apartment/townhouse.
- Cats are only allowed in assigned residential dwelling of the owner
- Cats must possess friendly and sociable characteristics.
- A specific cat can be restricted from the premises by the Director of Residence Life based on any confirmed threatening and/or harmful behavior.

Any Other Animal:

- A copy of the veterinarian's report must be on file with the ORL, if applicable.
- All required applicable immunizations must be up-to-date
- A copy of applicable immunizations must be on file with the ORL.
- The animal must only be allowed in the assigned dwelling of the owner
- The animal must never be allowed to roam freely
- The animal must possess friendly and sociable characteristics
- A specific animal can be restricted from the premises by the Director of Residence Life based on any confirmed threatening and/or harmful behavior.

Standards and Expectations of Behavior by Animal and Animal Owner Health, sanitary, safety, and orderly standards must be maintained as follows:

Animal Care

- Animals require daily food and attention, as well as a daily assessment of their general health, behavior, and overall welfare.
- Approved animals cannot be left unattended overnight in college housing to be cared for by another student, except in emergencies.
- If the owner must be away for a short period of time (1 to 3 days) due to an emergency such as a hospitalization, they must contact their emergency contact on campus to care for the animal. If the emergency goes beyond this time, the owner should look into alternative off-campus care for the animal. If the owner is away for a planned period of time the owner must either take the animal with them, or make off- campus arrangements for the animal to be cared for elsewhere.
- Emotional/comfort animals must not be taken into the staff offices in the residences, administrative offices, common spaces, academic buildings, or other student living areas.
- Emotional/comfort animals are permitted in common areas that are controlled by the animal's owner (e.g. the common room in the suites, the bathroom in the apartments) with consent of other students assigned to that space (ie: suitemates, housemates). Animals are restricted from all common spaces in the traditional halls (ie: lounges, bathrooms, study rooms)
- Animal feces, defined as cat litter box contents and any solid animal waste, must be disposed of properly in dumpsters (not in residence hall trash receptacles or through the sewer system inside any building).
- It is the owner's responsibility to remove feces from College grounds, dispose of them in a plastic bag, and then place that bag in the dumpster outside.
- Clean-up must occur immediately.
- Residents with cats must properly maintain litter boxes.
- In consideration of the health of the cat and occupants of the room/suite/apartment/townhouse, cat litter box contents must be disposed of properly and regularly (recommended daily).
- The litter box must be changed with new cat litter regularly as outlined by the manufacturer.
- Animal-accidents within the room/suite/apartment/townhouse must be promptly cleaned up using appropriate cleaning products.
- Regular and routine cleaning of floors, kennels, cages, and litter boxes must occur.
- The odor of an animal emanating from the room/suite/apartment/townhouse is not acceptable. (See Cleaning section below.)
- Any flea infestation must be attended to promptly by a professional extermination company. The College's Physical Plant will schedule the extermination, which will be at the resident's expense. Animal owners are expected to promptly notify the ORL and Physical Plant (ext. 4287) to arrange for extermination when a flea problem is noted.

- Animal owners are urged to take precautionary measures such as: flea medications prescribed by veterinarians, flea and tick collars, taking your animal to the veterinarian for flea and tick baths. College staff may not use chemical agents and insecticides to exterminate fleas and ticks.

Because not all of the precautions listed here can prevent flea and tick infestations, the owner is responsible for extermination costs after vacating the room/suite/apartment/townhouse.

Animal Behavior and SMCM Response

- Animals must not disrupt others (e.g. barking frequently, growling, yowling, howling, crying, etc.).
- Animals which constitute a threat (perceived or otherwise) or nuisance to staff, residents, or property, as determined by the Director of Residence Life, must be removed from campus within seven (7) days of notification. Immediate remediation may be implemented during the 7 day period prior to removal. Immediate removal may be required based on the severity of the alleged disruption.
- If the College determines that the animal poses an immediate threat, animal control may be summoned to remove the animal.
- If the behavior of an animal can be addressed by the owner and the owner can change the behavior of an animal so that the animal does not have to be removed, then a written action plan must be submitted by the owner.
- The action plan must outline the action that will take place to alleviate the problems and also must give a deadline as to the length of time the plan will take.
- Any action plan must meet the approval of the Director of Residence Life.
- The day after the deadline for removal from college housing, College staff will do a room inspection to check for damages and infestation and then the mandatory cleaning and extermination will be scheduled.
- Any animal owner found not adhering to the removal directive will be subject to conduct action. Conduct action could include contract cancellation.
- An animal must not be involved in an incident where a person experiences either the threat of or an actual injury as a result of the animal's behavior.
- The animal owner will take all reasonable precautions to protect College staff and residents, as well as College property and the property of others.
- The owner will notify the ORL if the animal escapes its confines and is unable to be located within 12 hours.
- All liability for the actions of the animal (bites, scratches, damages, etc.) is the responsibility of the owner.
- The owner must notify roommate(s)/suitemates/housemates before submitting the animal registration form to ORL before bringing the animal into the room/suite/apartment/townhouse.

- Violations concerning any of the aforementioned may result in the resident having to find alternative housing off-campus for the animal and, as warranted, may also result in a resident being in breach of their housing contract.

Cleaning and Damages

- Periodic, announced inspections (by Physical Plant, Residence Life, and/or the Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator) will be done to check for cleanliness, replace air filters, check air handlers, and ensure that pet hair is not accumulating in fan coils, clogging condensation drain pans, etc.
- When the resident moves out of his/her room/suite/apartment/townhouse or no longer owns the animal, the living space will be assessed to determine if damage to College property can be attributed to the animal.
- The College maintains the right to conduct room inspections for the purpose of assessing damage caused by the animal or otherwise determining the resident's compliance with this procedure.
- The animal owner has an obligation to make sure that the living space is as clean as or cleaner than the original standard.
- If the living space has carpet, regular vacuuming and spot cleaning must occur.
- Repairing damages and cleaning all mess caused by the animal are the responsibility of the resident. Replacement or repair of damaged items will be the financial responsibility of the owner.

Laundry

- A washer and a dryer will be designated in each laundry room where a comfort animal has been approved. Due to concerns about other student's allergies, students with approved animals must use the designated washer and dryer.

Housing

- Due to concerns regarding the welfare of the animal and the need for certain animals to have adequate living space, as well as the student's welfare, size of a comfort animal and space available in a student's assigned living space should be considered by the student prior to bringing their animal on campus.
- Having a comfort animal does not necessitate that a student will be assigned to a single room or a large room such in a townhouse or suite nor will the College mandate that a student with a comfort animal be assigned to live in a single room or a townhouse or suite.

Changing Emotional Support Animal

- A student may change their animal if the animal and student are not bonding well or if the animal is noisy, interfering with other students, etc., but the student must first re-submit all of the paperwork (the Emotional Comfort Animal Registration Form, the Vet Verification Form).

Multiple Emotional Support Animals

- If a student needs to have more than one emotional support animal, the documentation provided to the College must include the reason(s) for more than one animal or the animals must be able to safely share a confined space(ie: one cage/aquarium). The documentation outlines a need for multiple animals that must be related to the student's disability related needs, not the needs of the animal.

Alternate/Emergency Caregiver

- In the event of an emergency (i.e. due to an accident, illness, hospitalization), an alternate/emergency caregiver must be identified on the Comfort Animal Registration Form.
- The identified caregiver must have quick and easy access to the student's room and ideally, should be a member of the SMCM community. Hence, parents, friends from home, etc. are not appropriate emergency caregivers unless the caregiver lives within a reasonable distance to the college (within a one hour drive to campus).

Roommates/Suitemates/Housemates

- Before a student with an emotional support animal will be permitted to bring the animal into housing, all roommates, suitemates, or housemates must be amenable to having the animal sharing the space and must agree to abide by the expectations outlined in this document.
- If any of the roommates/suitemates/housemates are afraid, allergic, or otherwise do not wish to live with an animal, arrangements will have to be made for either the student that does not want to live with an animal or the owner of the animal to move to a more suitable arrangement.
- The animal's owner is required to keep the animal under control at all times.

- The animal should not be allowed to roam freely into other bedrooms or into common spaces not controlled by the animal's owner.
- New Roommate/Suitemate/Housemate Agreement may be contacted by the ORL to provide confirmation of consent. It is still the responsibility of the animal owner to notify all roommate/suitemates/housemates of their approved animal in residence

Notification

- The College will notify the following of an approved animal in residence: Residence Life staff in the building/area, Public Safety, Physical Plant, and the local fire departments.

Housekeeping/Maintenance/Public Safety

- A student living on North Campus is to keep their approved animal in their bedroom behind closed doors when they are out of their townhouse, apartment, or suite.
- This is especially important for the students living in the LQ and WC suites since housekeeping staff members have to go into the suites to clean the bathrooms.
- We have some staff members in housekeeping and maintenance who are fearful and/or allergic to some of the approved animals on campus and we must be respectful of these staff members who are trying to do their assigned work.
- If Physical Plant or Public Safety staff must enter a room, townhouse, apartment, or suite that has an animal within the space, the animal must be contained within a kennel, crate, or cage with the owner present at all times.
- Physical Plant staff will try to schedule routine maintenance work in advance with the animal owner.
- If the owner is unable to be present during the time of a repair, the animal must be vacated from the area prior to the scheduled repair time unless kenneled or crated.
- If an emergency exists, the animal may be restrained in order to protect the employees and the animal.

Conflicting Disabilities:

Students who have health conditions such as asthma, allergies, phobias, or a disability that is adversely affected by the proximity of a Comfort Animal should contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS). If the individual raising the concern is a student, they may be asked to provide documentation and have an interactive meeting with OAS to determine if the needs of this student can be mitigated by accommodations or if an alternate solution may be presented.