**Galveston College**

**ANIMALS ON COLLEGE PROPERTY POLICY**

 Galveston College seeks to uphold federal, state, and local laws and regulations; ensure the health and safety of its community; preserve the integrity of its grounds, buildings, and other property; and support a healthful educational environment that respects the rights of all individuals.

Service animals are welcome in all buildings on campus and may attend any class, meeting, or other event. Service animals are allowed anywhere students are allowed.

Individuals with documented disabilities residing on campus may request that a service or therapy animal be allowed to reside in a campus residence; however, therapy animals are not permitted anywhere outside of the individual’s assigned living space except as otherwise provided by this policy.

All students requesting to have a service or therapy animal in student housing must initiate the approval process with the Special Services Office at Galveston College. The student must provide medical documentation from a qualified medical professional who has evaluated the student. Online ‘certifications’ for comfort animals will not be accepted if they are obtained through medical personnel or others who have never medically evaluated the student. Qualified medical professions may include physician, psychiatrist, social worker, or other mental health professional. Documentation should state that the animal provides support that alleviates at least one of the identified symptoms or effects of the existing disability.

Reasonable behavior is expected from the animal while on campus. If the animal exhibits unacceptable behavior, the handler is expected to employ the proper training techniques to correct the situation. Consideration of others must be taken into account when providing for the maintenance and hygiene of service animals. Additionally, specific guidelines have been established concerning service and therapy animals living in a campus residency environment.

**Section I: Definitions**

**Handler -** A person with a disability using a service animal; a person who has received approval for a therapy animal accommodation; or a person in possession of an animal for recreation on campus.

**Service Animal** - Any animal that is 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. Other animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the handler’s disability. The crime deterrent effects of an animal’s presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purpose of this definition.

**Therapy Animals** - An animal that works, provides assistance, or performs tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability or provides emotional support or therapeutic benefits that alleviate one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of a person’s disability; however, the animal is not required to be individually trained or certified to perform such task. Therapy animals include “emotional support animals” and “assistive animals” used to support individuals with mental disabilities. These animals may provide crime deterrent effects or emotional support, well-being or comfort.

**Recreational Animals** - A domestic animal used for sport, companionship, or other non-service/assistance functions. Recreational animals are not allowed inside college facilities.

**Unauthorized Animals** - Any animal not controlled by a leash or harness, unless the animal is a service animal and the handler is unable because of disability to use a leash or harness or if the leash or harness restricts the service animal to function appropriately as such. Also, any animal that exhibits violent, uncontrollable, aggressive, or unhealthy behavior, including service and therapy animals.

**Section II: Service Animals**A. College Responsibility

 a. Allow service animals to accompany the handler to all areas of the facility where the handler is
 normally allowed to go. A handler may not be segregated from other similar members of the campus
 community, except where there is real danger to the animal. Exceptions to the exclusions will be reviewed
 on a case-by case basis.

b. Not to pet, feed, or deliberately startle/disturb a service animal.

c. Not to separate, or attempt to separate, service animals from their handlers.

d. Provide handlers living on campus with an area for relieving and grooming their animals.

B. Inquiries

a. When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, the handler may be asked if the animal is a service animal required for a disability and/or what work or task the animal has been trained to perform. If a student’s answers to the two inquiries permitted by the ADA do not provide the information necessary for the institution to make a decision that the animal is a service animal, the institution may require additional information.

b. If it is a disability and animal’s duties are obvious, staff may not ask about the person’s disability, require medical documentation, require certification of the dog’s training, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

c. Use of animals other than dogs as service animals will be reviewed based on the inquiries and exceptions listed below and allowed by law.

C. Service Animal in Training

a. Individuals who desire an accommodation for a service animal in training must also abide by all relevant provisions of this policy.

b. An animal being trained to be a service animal will be treated as a fully trained animal when accompanied by a handler and identified as such.

D. Exceptions

a. Service animals may be denied or removed if:

i. The animal is out of control and its handler does not take effective action to control it;

ii. The animal is not housebroken (i.e., trained so that, absent illness or accident, the animal controls its waste elimination);

iii. The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level by a reasonable accommodation.

 **Section III: Therapy Animals**

A. Inquiries

1. Requests for therapy animals may be made by individuals with documented disabilities residing on campus or commuters taking classes on Galveston College campuses.
2. If the animal does not meet the definition of service animal, the resident must provide medical documentation from a health professional who has met with and diagnosed the student and follow the procedures to register with the Special Services Office.
3. The Office of Student Life or the Special Services Office may ask individuals who have disabilities that are not readily apparent or known to the college official to submit reliable documentation of a disability and their disability-related need for a therapy animal within student housing. The individual is not required to disclose medical information that is overly intrusive and invasive in order to receive an accommodation. However, the student must provide enough documentation to establish a medical need for a therapy animal.
4. All documentation is kept separately and confidentially and is not connected to the student’s academic records. All Special Services records are destroyed five years after the student seeks services from the Student Services Office.
5. A person qualifies for reasonable accommodation if:
	1. The person has a documented disability;
	2. The animal is necessary to afford the person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy student housing; and
	3. There is an identifiable relationship between the disability and the assistance the animal provides.

B. Exceptions

a. Therapy animals may be denied or removed if:

i. The specific therapy animal would impose an undue financial and administrative burden or would fundamentally alter the nature of student housing and/or classrooms.

ii. The specific therapy animal in question poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be reduced or eliminated by another reasonable accommodation, or

 iii. The specific therapy animal in question would cause substantial physical damage to the property of others that cannot be reduced or eliminated by another reasonable accommodation.

 **Section IV: Handler or Owner Responsibility**

A. Authorized Animals

a. Handlers must abide by all state laws, city ordinances related to animals in the City of Galveston, and Galveston College guidelines, including but not limited to:

* All animals in the city must have a valid license and tag issued if the city deems necessary. Annual renewal of the license and tag may be required annually.
* The handler is required to provide a collar or harness for the license and vaccination tags to be affixed. Handler shall see that the animal wears the collar and tags at all times.
* The handler is required to provide proof of vaccinations and rabies shots to Student Housing on a yearly basis or place tags on the animal’s collar that demonstrate up-to-date vaccinations and rabies shots.
* Waste removal and leash laws

b. Handler is liable for damages caused by the service animal, therapy animal, or recreational animal. Handler will be charge accordingly for any damages.

c. Handler is responsible for the care and supervision of a service animal, therapy animal, or recreational animal.

d. Handler must have full control of the animal at all times. Animals may not run at large; a leash or harness is required and may be required by city ordinances unless the handler is unable because of disability to use a leash or harness or it restricts the animal’s ability to function appropriately.

e. Disturbing animal vocalization must be kept to an absolute minimum. If the animal is disruptive, the handler must take the animal to a place where it is not disrupting others until the animal is under control.

f. Handlers must relieve animals in designated locations. All feces must be picked up, sealed in a container and disposed of in an outdoor trash can.

g. Handler must observe housing and food service establishment guidelines. Therapy animals are not permitted in the dining hall or any other buildings on campus.

h. All service/therapy animals must have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian. Animal’s cleanliness is mandatory in the campus environment.

i. Vaccinations must be current and based on a veterinarian’s recommendations. Handler must provide evidence of updated vaccinations, rabies shots and licensure, where common and applicable to the type of animal registered. Evidence of such compliance must be provided to the Office of Student Life and Special Services Office annually.

 j. Daily grooming and occasional baths should be undertaken to keep the service animal’s odor to a minimum. This includes the maintenance and cleanliness of the room. Litter must be cleaned daily. Shedding of hair must be cleaned up daily. Rooms with any kind of service animals are held to a higher standard.

k. Parasite control is essential and adequate preventative measures must be taken. If a parasite problem develops, it must be dealt with immediately and in an effective manner. In the event a parasite problem is not eliminated by the handler, the college will exterminate the property and assess the handler the standard extermination fee.

B. Unauthorized Animals

a. In the event an unauthorized animal is discovered on or in college property, except student housing, the College Police Department should be notified immediately. The responding officer may take appropriate action, up to and including ordering the handler or owner to remove the unauthorized animal from College property or by contacting the Galveston Animal Control Officer who will take possession of the animal and remove it from campus.

b. In the event an unauthorized animal is discovered in student housing, the appropriate housing staff member shall be notified immediately. Staff will attempt to contact the owner/handler of the unauthorized animal for removal. If the owner/handler cannot be contracted, student housing staff will contact the Campus Police Department for removal as indicated in this policy.

 **Section V: Additional Guidelines**

A. Occupants of campus housing are not permitted to keep pets.

B. Service animals are permitted to accompany the individual with a disability to all areas of the facility where persons are normally allowed to go.

C. Therapy animals are not permitted anywhere on campus outside of the individual’s assigned living space. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis from Student Life or Special Services Office.

D. Service/therapy animals should be kept under control. Animals should always be on a leash except when in the student’s room with the door closed unless the leash restricts the service animal’s ability to function appropriately.

E. Animal food should be kept in a covered storage container to deter pests.

F. Animal’s paws must be kept off tables, trays, and food service counters at all times.

**Section VI: Information and Appeals**
Questions and concerns regarding the use of service/therapy animals on college property should be directed to the Special Services Office which provides advice about procedures and access to programs and services.