

Converse College Service and Assistance Animal Policy

As established and defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service animals shall not be excluded from Converse College facilities or activities. To facilitate appropriate acceptance of service animals in classes and other campus areas, students with service animals must affiliate with the disability services office as described below prior to bringing service animals into classes.

As stated by the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered while in public, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. For the benefit of students and the community, it is recommended that all service animals wear a vest indicating them as a service animal. Service animals in training must wear a vest identifying them as a "Service Animal in Training" when in public. Service animals may travel with their handler on the campus, excluding those areas that may pose a safety risk (listed in the policy). Service animals may live in College housing with prior approval through the request for accommodations and by completing the Service/Assistance Animal Agreement.

Separate from Service Animals, assistance animals may be considered for access to College housing. Assistance animals may not reside in College Housing without approval for an accommodation and prior approval from the residential life office. All assistance animals residing in College housing must comply with the requirements outlined in the Service/Assistance Animal Agreement. Permission to have an Assistance animal in College Housing does not extend access to other campus facilities or to common areas of the residence halls.

Handlers must take responsibility for obtaining a dog license from the City of Spartanburg within 30 days of bringing a service or assistance animal to campus, and for abiding by all other City of Spartanburg animal control ordinances. Handlers are also responsible for ensuring that animals are under their control and adhering to any College and City clean-up rules.

Residential Life may exclude a service animal or assistance animal from housing if it 1) poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others; 2) would cause substantial physical damage to the property of others; 3) would pose an undue financial and administrative burden, and/or 4) results in a fundamental alteration of the College's program(s).

Definitions:

Assistance Animal: An assistance animal is not a pet. An assistance animal is a companion animal that provides therapeutic benefit to an individual with a mental or psychiatric disability. The person seeking the assistance animal must have a verifiable disability (the reason cannot just be a need for companionship). The animal is viewed as a "reasonable accommodation" under the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 (the FHA) to those housing communities that have a "no pets" rule. In other words, just as a wheelchair provides a person with a physical limitation the equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling, an emotional support animal provides a person with a mental or psychiatric disability the same opportunity to live independently. Most times, an

emotional support animal will be seen as a reasonable accommodation for a person with such a disability.

To qualify, a person must meet the federal definition of disability and must have documentation from a physician or other medical professional stating that a person has a disability and that the reasonable accommodation (here, the emotional support animal) provides benefit for the individual with the disability. The emotional support animal alleviates or mitigates some of the symptoms of the disability.

Service Animal: Any dog or miniature pony that is individually trained or in the process of being trained to do work or perform specific 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 individual's disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting an individual who is blind or has low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting an individual to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to an individual with mobility disabilities, and helping an individual with psychiatric and/or neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors.

Service Animals in Training: Individuals training a service animal are afforded the same rights as those individuals who require the assistance of a service animal. If you are training a service animal to aid and guide persons with disabilities, you must contact the disability services office and comply with the requirements set forth in this Policy.

Handler: The individual with a disability who utilizes a service or assistance animal as an accommodation.

Accommodation: Any modification or adjustment in policies, practices, procedures, or work/school/housing environment to enable a qualified individual with a disability to enjoy equal opportunities and access to College rights, privileges, benefits and services.

Procedures for Documenting Service/Assistance Animals:

Documentation *is* required for review of requests for accommodations related to service and assistance animals and must be completed and submitted to the disability services office.

The following steps comprise the process for approval under this policy. Student must:

- complete registration with the disability services office by submitting a request for accommodation through disability services.
- submit official documentation (outlined below).

- meet with the disability services office to review any pertinent campus-wide policies that may relate to the animal.
- review and sign Converse College Service/Assistance Animal Agreement.
- provide evidence that the animal is in good health, and has been vaccinated against diseases common to that breed of animal as recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association. Veterinary records attesting to that fact must be submitted in writing prior to the animal taking residence.
- (for an animal in residence) meet with a Residential Life liaison prior to the animal taking occupancy in College housing in order to review the agreement and expectations.

Documentation Guidelines

a) A written request from the prospective handler explaining

- the need for the animal
- the type of animal
- the date when the animal was put into service
- description of the animal (e.g. weight, breed, etc.), whether the animal is housebroken, and the animal's name.

b) Documentation of medical and/or psychological conditions require the completion of forms available online at <http://www.converse.edu/student-life/center-student-development-success/disability-services/students> by a licensed healthcare professional. In order to ensure an objective assessment, the professional completing the evaluation must be an impartial individual who is not related to the student.

The forms should include information specifically addressing:

- the nature of the proposed handler's disability,
- the date[s] of the medical diagnosis and prescription for such an animal,
- how the animal is necessary to provide the proposed handler access to Converse College and/or the housing program, and
- the relationship between the disability and the service/assistance the animal provides.

Documentation from External Sources:

Relevant information from external sources can help to substantiate the presence of a disability and the need for accommodations. This information should provide evidence of the functional limitations of the disability and their impact on the student's life. Criteria for the source, scope, and content of documentation differ by disability type. Documentation may include assessments, reports, and/or letters from qualified health care providers, psychologists, or diagnosticians, and information from a previous school (e.g., 504 plan, IEP, or ARD documents). In order to ensure

an objective assessment, the professional completing the evaluation must be an impartial individual who is not related to the student.

Suggested Documentation Guidelines:

1. Typed on letterhead, dated, and signed by a qualified licensed professional.
2. Diagnostic statement with any related diagnostic methodology (e.g., diagnostic criteria, procedures, assessment instruments, and/or test scores).
3. Functional limitations or symptoms. (Limitations identify which accommodations are appropriate.)
4. Severity and/or expected progression.
5. Current medication(s) and any related side-effects.
6. Any other relevant information and/or additional information regarding the condition.
7. Current and/or past accommodations.
8. Any recommended accommodations.

Specific documentation guidelines are provided to assist students in obtaining appropriate documentation from qualified licensed professionals. The provision of this documentation assists the disability services coordinator in understanding the impact of the disability, the student's needs, and potential accommodations. Documentation is required for the following reasons:

- to verify the existence of a disability;
- to support the request for each specific accommodation;
- to review the nature of the disability and its impact in the postsecondary environment; and
- to assist in the collaborative determination of eligibility for auxiliary aids and services.

The Converse College Wellness Center does not administer evaluations/assessments required for documentation of disabilities. The Wellness Center can 'screen' for symptoms relating to ADHD but will refer students elsewhere for formal evaluation for ADHD and LD or other documented disabilities.

The disability services coordinator will review submitted materials and set up a meeting to discuss appropriate accommodations with the student.

As with all accommodations that have an academic component, students are required to notify their professors each semester of the accommodations. Student should email the professor prior to the first class meeting to schedule a meeting within the first week of class to discuss the presence of the service animal in their classroom.

Deadlines:

Request deadline for returning students is Feb. 1; request deadline for new students entering in the fall is June 1; entering for spring is November 1 (a student admitted after these deadlines must apply within two weeks of admission but no less than one week prior to the start of the term).

It is strongly advised that prospective handlers give a copy of the relevant medical documentation guidelines to their treating clinicians. Prospective handlers should be aware that it may take up to **30 days** for requests to be reviewed. Insufficient documentation may result in accommodation delays or denial.

College Housing of Service/Assistance Animals:

For any service animal or approved assistance animal to live in College housing, the Director of Residential Life (or designee) and the Director of Student Support Services will meet with the student handler to review and sign the Converse College Residential Life Service/Assistance Animal Agreement for Campus Housing. Once this has been completed, the handler must follow all sections of the Service/Assistance Animal Agreement, including Handler Responsibilities. Permission to have an Assistance animal in College Housing does not extend access to other campus facilities or to common areas of the residence halls (e.g., lounges, class/meeting rooms, laundry rooms).

Confidentiality and Authority:

Information regarding disability is considered highly confidential, is maintained in separate, secure files with limited access, and is only shared on a need-to-know basis. Authorizations for animals used for disability-related accommodations are made based on medical and/or mental health documentation and the situation at hand, and are not subject to challenge by someone other than the person utilizing the service or assistance animal.

Policy Revisions and Review:

This policy is subject to revision and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Please keep a copy of your documentation. The disability services office holds documentation for a limited time period after a student leaves the College; all documentation will be destroyed at the end of this time period or upon the request of the student.

Documentation may be brought in or mailed to:
Converse College
Director for Student Support Services
580 East Main Street
Spartanburg, SC 29302

Procedure to Request Service or Assistance Animal Housing Accommodations

Converse College provides reasonable accommodations to students living on campus with a documented disability. Residential Life policy allows service or assistance animals to live with students in their on-campus accommodation upon approval by the disability services office. The student will be asked to provide documentation verifying: 1) the person has a disability; 2) the animal is necessary to afford the person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling; and 3) there is an identifiable relationship or nexus between the disability and the assistance the animal provides. For specific information regarding all policies and procedures, refer to the Converse Service and Assistance Animal Policy.

Service animals are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Such animals might guide individuals with impaired vision, alert individuals who are hearing impaired to intruders or sounds, pull a wheelchair, or fetch items used in daily living.

Assistance animals are not considered service animals and are not permitted in any other area other than the student's on-campus residence and immediate surrounding area.

Residential Life may exclude a service animal or assistance animal from housing if it 1) poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others; 2) would cause substantial physical damage to the property of others; 3) would pose an undue financial and administrative burden, and/or 4) results in a fundamental alteration of the College's program(s).