

## Student – Policy and Procedures for Service Animals and Assistance Animals

**Policy Number: 100.1124.101**

Policy Date: 5-24-2022

**Policy Category: General Administrative**

**Policy Owner: Vice President of Academic Affairs**

**Policy Audience: Students, GCSOM  
Administration, Faculty and Staff**

### **Definitions:**

The term “**service animal**” is defined by the Department of Justice (DOJ) in regulations implementing Titles II and III of the ADA to mean 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. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals.

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 individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks; alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds; pulling a wheelchair; detecting the onset of a seizure and then assisting an individual during a seizure; alerting individuals to the presence of allergens; alerting a person with diabetes when his or her blood sugar reaches high or low levels; retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone; providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities; and helping individuals with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors or reminding them to take their medication.

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 purpose of this definition. For example, if a dog’s mere presence provides comfort, that would not be considered a service animal.

The term “**assistance animal**” means an animal that provides assistance or performs tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, or provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of an individual’s disability. Assistance animals may provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship. While dogs are the most common type of assistance animal, other animals can also be assistance animals.

## **2. Medical Curriculum Committee**

### **Review:**

Date of review: May 24,  
2022

## **3. Introduction / Purpose:**

Some individuals with disabilities use service animals or assistance animals that enable them to fully participate in everyday life. The School of Medicine ("SOM") is committed to full compliance with the requirements of Titles I, II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations of the Fair Housing Act, 24 CFR § 100.202: § 100.204 in responding to the use of service animals and assistance animals by persons with a disability. The purpose of this policy is to identify the responsibilities of the SOM with respect to animals that provide service (service animals) and assistance (assistance animals) to individuals with disabilities in the employment context and with respect to programs, projects, and activities that are conducted by GCSOM.

## **4. Governance and Enforcement:**

Vice President of Academic Affairs

## **5. Policy:**

GCSOM has adopted policy that typically forbids pets or animals within its buildings. However, consistent with GCSOM's obligations under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to make reasonable modifications to its policies, the SOM will respond to requests from individuals with disabilities to use service animals and assistance animals to participate in or benefit from programs, projects, or activities.

- SOM's Policy on Service Animals limits the type of animal that can be requested (dogs only) and prescribes the work or tasks that the dog must perform and specifies functions such as emotional support and comfort that are not included. Consistent with the DOJ approach applicable to service animals, the SOM approach limits the types of inquiries SOM may make and restricts the documentation that may be required.
- SOM's Policy on Assistance Animals does not limit the type of animal that can be requested and treats requests for assistance animals in a manner consistent with the general policies applicable to all requests for reasonable modifications of policies, practices, and procedures outlined in the GCSOM Policy and Procedures for Disability Services and outlined in the guide "Guidelines for Requesting Academic and Nonacademic Accommodations."

With respect to employment, GCSOM adopts the approach taken by EEOC in informal guidance which is to treat requests for service animals and assistance animals in a manner comparable to the general policies and procedures applicable to requests for any reasonable accommodation.

Requests by employees for the use of a service animal should be made to the Human Resources Department.

## **SERVICE ANIMALS USED TO PARTICIPATE IN OR BENEFIT FROM PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, OR ACTIVITIES**

### **Procedures for Requesting the Use of a Service Animal**

Requests by an applicant or enrolled student for the use of a service animal should be made to the Accessibility Services Coordinator in the Center for Learning Excellence.

GCSOM will not ask about the nature or extent of a person's visible disability when requesting the use of a service animal. In situations where it is not readily apparent that an individual requesting the use of a service animal has a disability and where it is not readily apparent that the requested dog is a service animal (e.g., individual with a seizure disability using a seizure alert service animal, individual with a psychiatric disability using a psychiatric service animal, individual with an autism-related disability using an autism service animal), the disability officer/human resource generalist may make two inquiries to determine whether an individual's request can be applied to this policy and if the animal requested qualifies as a service animal:

1. Is the service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or tasks has the animal been trained to perform?

GCSOM may not make these two inquiries when it is readily apparent that the animal is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability e.g., the dog is 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.

### **Procedure for Documenting the Need for a Service Animal**

Once it is apparent that an individual is an individual with a disability and the animal requested is a service animal, GCSOM will not require documentation, such as proof that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a service animal or require that the dog demonstrate tasks. GCSOM will not ask for special identification cards for the animal. It should be noted, however, that individuals who have service animals are not exempt from local animal control or public health requirements e.g., all dogs must be vaccinated. Also, service animals are subject to local dog licensing and registration requirements.

### **General Considerations**

A service dog may not be excluded based on assumptions or stereotypes about its breed, size, and/or weight.

An individual with a disability using a service dog will not be charged a surcharge for the presence of the animal. However, GCSOM may charge individuals for any damage caused by their service animal.

Animal handlers must control their service animals at all times. Handlers are responsible for caring for and supervising their service animal, which includes toileting, feeding, grooming and veterinary care. GCSOM is not obligated to supervise or otherwise care for a service animal.

GCSOM may ask an individual with a disability to remove a service animal from the premises if:

1. The animal is out of control and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control it; or
2. The animal is not housebroken i.e., trained so that, absence illness or accident, the animal controls its waste elimination.

Service animals must have a harness, leash or other tether, unless the handler's disability prevents use of such controls or their use would interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks. The service animal must be under the handler's control (e.g., voice control, signals, or other effective means).

Service animals may accompany individuals with disabilities in all areas of GCSOM's facilities where members of the public, participants in services, programs, or activities, or invitees, as relevant, are permitted to go unless one of the below defenses/exceptions applies.

The general defenses/exceptions include:

- Undue financial and administrative burden
- Fundamental alteration of the nature of the program, project, or activity
- Direct threat to health and safety that cannot be reduced or eliminated by another reasonable accommodation or reasonable modification to a policy, practice, or procedure.

Areas where a service animal generally will not be permitted access include environments in which the presence of the animal will pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others, such as the gross anatomy laboratory, in the simulation center and with standardized patients, operating rooms, patient units where a patient is immune-suppressed or in isolation for respiratory, enteric, or infectious precautions.

### **ASSISTANCE ANIMALS USED TO PARTICIPATE IN OR BENEFIT FROM PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, OR ACTIVITIES**

Individuals with disabilities may request a reasonable modification of policies, practices, or procedures in order to be accompanied by an assistance animal, including an emotional support animal, where GCSOM generally forbids individuals from having pets or otherwise imposes restrictions or conditions relating to pets or other animals. The general principles applicable to all academic and nonacademic accommodations requests set out in the Policy and Procedures for Disability Services and outlined in the guide "Guidelines for Requesting Academic and Nonacademic Accommodations" are applicable to requests for an assistance animal.

Due to the nature of the environment, assistance animals will typically not be allowed to be present in environments in which the presence of the animal will pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others, such as the gross anatomy laboratory, in the simulation center and with standardized patients, operating rooms, patient units where a patient is immune-suppressed or in isolation for respiratory, enteric, or infectious precautions.

### **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

A student, prospective student or employee who is dissatisfied with the decision of GCSOM about the use of a service animal may file a grievance under GCSOM's Policy on Grievance Other Than Grades or Policy on Non-Discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity.

### **6. Key Stakeholders:**

Students, GCSOM Faculty and Staff