



ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES

CONTACT US: Phone: 508-565-1306 | Email: oar@stonehill.edu | Web: www.stonehill.edu/oar

Service and Emotional Support Animals

This document describes the procedures for the use of service animals and emotional support animals by students on the Stonehill College campus. Stonehill College complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in allowing use of service animals for students, staff and visitors. Stonehill complies with the Fair Housing Act in allowing students the use of emotional support animals that are approved as an accommodation.

Assistance Animals Defined

“Assistance animals” are a category of animals that may work, provide assistance, or perform physical tasks for an individual with a disability and/or provide necessary emotional support to an individual with a mental or psychiatric disability that alleviates one or more identified symptoms of an individual’s disability.

Service Animals

A **Service Animal** is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

Federal regulations do not require the individual with a disability to provide documented proof of training of the dog, nor do they have to provide documentation of their disability. When a student’s disability is obvious, Stonehill does not require documentation, such as proof that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a service animal. In situations where it is not obvious that the dog is a service animal, students may be asked the following two questions:

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

Emotional Support Animals

The Fair Housing Act defines an emotional support animal as any animal that provides emotional support, well-being, or companionship that alleviates or mitigates symptoms of the disability; the animal is not individually trained. ESAs are not limited to dogs and can be other species of animal. They are not considered service animals.

The question in determining if an ESA will be allowed in College housing is whether the animal is necessary because of the individual's disability to afford equal opportunity to use and enjoy College housing and its presence in College housing is reasonable. However, even if the individual with a disability establishes necessity for an ESA and it is allowed in College housing, the animal is not permitted in other areas of the College (e.g., dining facilities, library, academic buildings, athletic buildings and facilities, classrooms, labs etc.).

Procedures for Requesting an Emotional Support Animal

1. **Register with the Office Accessibility Resources (OAR)** by completing the online registration form.
*Students already receiving accommodations through OAR do not have to re-register.
2. **Schedule a meeting to discuss the accommodation request.** Set up a meeting by calling (508) 565-1306.
3. **Complete the Housing Accommodations Request Form** below.
4. **Submit disability documentation.** Please refer to the Documentation Guidelines for assistance in providing documentation that is appropriate to verify eligibility and support your specific housing accommodation.
 - a. Fax documentation to 508-565-1492
 - b. Email documentation to oar@stonehill.edu
 - c. Mail documentation to:
Office of Accessibility Resources, Stonehill College, 320 Washington Street Easton, MA 02357
 - d. In person, by appointment. (Please call 508-565-1306 to request an appointment.)

A request for an assistance animal may be denied as unreasonable if the presence of the animal: (1) imposes an undue financial and/or administrative burden; (2) fundamentally alters College housing policies; and/or (3) poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others or would cause substantial property damage to the property of others, including College property.

Stonehill College may consider the following factors, among others, as evidence in determining whether the presence of the assistance animal is reasonable or in the making of housing assignments for individuals with an assistance animal:

1. The size of the animal is too large for available assigned housing space;
2. The animal's presence would force another individual from individual housing (e.g., serious allergies);
3. The animal's presence otherwise violates individuals' right to peace and quiet enjoyment;
4. The animal is not housebroken or is unable to live with others in a reasonable manner;
5. The animal's vaccinations are not up-to-date;
6. The animal poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the individual or others such as aggressive behavior towards or injuring the individual or others

Such a determination must be based on an individualized assessment that relies on objective evidence about animal's actual conduct, not on mere speculation.

Where Service Animals Are Allowed

Subject to some limitations, service animals may accompany students throughout campus. The College may restrict the use of service animals in certain locations. Service animals may be restricted when their presence would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program or activity; or where the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. The safety of locations will be considered on an individual basis by appropriate College personnel. If a location is determined to be unsafe, reasonable accommodations will be

provided to ensure the individual equal access to the activity. With few exceptions, service animals are allowed in classrooms, administrative buildings, residential areas and dining areas. However, the service animal may be excluded from laboratory or animal research areas where the dog would create a disruption or compromise a sterile environment. In such cases alternate accommodations will be provided to the person with the disability.

Notification about the Presence of a Service Animal

While a person with a disability is not required to notify the College about their service animal, we do encourage users/handlers to self-identify to Accessibility Resources in order to facilitate communication with faculty, staff and administrators and/or to determine if other types of accommodations are warranted. In particular, if a user/handler plans to have their service animal live with them in our residence halls, we ask them to provide notice to the College in order to ensure appropriate housing accommodations. Students are encouraged to provide notice to the College by contacting the Office of Accessibility Resources in Duffy 104, by calling 508-565-1306 or accessibility-resources@stonehill.edu. Stonehill College recommends service animals be identifiable by wearing a vest or harness.

Where Emotional Support Animals are Allowed

An ESA must be contained within the privately assigned individual living accommodations (e.g., room, suite) except to the extent the individual is taking the animal out for natural relief. When an ESA is outside the private individual living accommodations, it must be in an animal carrier or controlled by a leash or harness. ESAs are not allowed in any College facilities other than the residence hall to which the individual is assigned.

Responsibilities of Individuals Using Service/Emotional Support Animals

While access rights are legally afforded to users of service and emotional support animals, that access is accompanied by the responsibility of ensuring that animals act and respond appropriately at all times while in public and that users/handlers adhere to the same socially accepted standards of behavior as other members of the College community. Users/handlers are responsible for ensuring the safety of their animal as well as for their cost, care, and supervision.

Control Responsibilities

- Owners must keep the animal under control at all times. An assistance animal shall have a harness, leash, or other tether, at all times outside of the owner's private quarters or work area.
- In shared living spaces, the animal should be in an appropriate container if the owner is not in the room with the animal.
- Owners must properly clean up after and dispose of the animal's waste in a safe and sanitary manner and, when provided, must use animal relief areas designated by Stonehill
- Relief areas are typically un-mowed and unmaintained areas on campus as designated by the College's Facilities Department. Students with service or emotional support animals residing on campus should meet with the Office of Accessibility Resources and Facilities personnel to designate, on an individual basis, appropriate relief areas.
- Animals may not be left overnight in college housing to be cared for by any individual other than the owner. If the owner is to be absent from his/her residence hall overnight or longer, the animal must accompany the owner. The owner is responsible for ensuring that the animal is contained, as appropriate, when not present during the day while attending classes or other activities.

- The owner agrees to abide by all equally applicable residential policies that are unrelated to the individual's disability such as assuring that the animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the residence or cause difficulties for individuals who reside there.

Financial Responsibilities

- A person who has an assistance animal on campus is financially responsible for property damage caused by his or her animal including but not limited to cost of repairs, replacement or cleaning of facilities or furnishings, and any bodily injury or personal injury caused to other persons by the animal.

Licensing/Health/Vaccination Requirements

- If the animal is residing on campus it must meet Easton's and/or Massachusetts licensing requirements and wear tags designating this license.
- Animals to be housed in College housing must have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian
- All animals living in College housing on a regular basis must be vaccinated against diseases common to that type of animal in accordance with state and local laws, rules and regulations.
- Owners must comply with the same College rules regarding noise, safety, disruption, and cleanliness as people without disabilities. If an assistance animal is determined to be out of control (e.g., displaying vicious behavior towards people; excessive barking, running around, nipping), the owner may be subject to action within the College's disciplinary process. The infraction will be reviewed on an individual basis through the student conduct process. All owners shall promptly comply with any College directive to remove their animal from an area in which it was previously authorized if:
 - It is out of control or its presence create an unmanageable disturbance within the college community and effective action is not taken to control it;
 - It is not housebroken; or
 - It poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be mitigated by reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures, or the provision of auxiliary aids or services.

Public Etiquette for Members of the Stonehill Community

Service and emotional support animals are not pets. Accordingly, the College asks that members of the Stonehill community and visitors adhere to the following best practices when interacting assistance animals:

Community members should not:

- Assume that the animal is a pet.
- Pet/touch a service animal. Petting distracts them from their responsibilities.
- Restrict the individual with a service animal from full participation in programs and activities of the College. This includes off campus activities and activities involving transportation.
- Make assumptions about the necessity of the assistance animal.
- Ask the handler about their specific medical condition.
- Prioritize the needs of another individual over the needs of an individual with an assistance animal. For example, we cannot restrict the access of an animal fearing another member of the community may have an allergy.
- Feed an assistance animal.
- Deliberately startle, tease or taunt an assistance animal.

- Separate or attempt to separate an animal his/her handler. Service animals are trained to be protective of the handler.
- Hesitate to ask the handler if he/she would like assistance if the team seems confused about a direction in which to turn, an accessible entrance, the location of an elevator, etc.

Conflicting Disabilities

Students with medical condition(s) affected by assistance animals should contact Accessibility Resources if they have a health or safety related concern about exposure to the animal. The individual impacted by the presence of the animal must register with the Office of Accessibility Resources and provide verifiable medical documentation to support the claim. The needs of both individuals will be considered in resolving the issue.

Complaints, Appeals and Exceptions to the Policy

Any claims of discrimination on the basis of a disability or failure to provide reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the Office of Accessibility Resources. Students wishing to request a modification or exception to this policy should also contact the Office of Accessibility Resources. [Accommodations Appeal Process](#).

Resources

[Fair Housing Act: Assistance Animals](#)

[Massachusetts Department of Health: Rabies Vaccination](#)

[Town of Easton: Dog License Requirements](#)

[MASS.GOV Details about Service and Assistance Animals](#)