

Animals on Campus Guide

Council of Ontario Universities

Animals on Campus Working Group

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BACKGROUND

In October 2016, members of the Reference Group on Accessibility (Reference Group) raised their ongoing concerns about the lack of clarity in regards to the definition of a service animal as provided in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Accessibility Standards for Customer Service. The definition does not clearly differentiate between service animals and emotional support or comfort animals. COU has written to the Ministry to express concerns regarding this item on two occasions (December 2014 and July 2016). The Ministry has acknowledged COU concerns; however, they have indicated that they will not be making any changes to the current definition of a service animal.

Reference Group members proposed the development of a shared set of policies and practices relating to the use of animals on campus. This item was referred to the Inter-University Disability Issues Association (IDIA) for discussion and feedback.

In the fall of 2017, the IDIA provided the Reference Group with working documents outlining considerations for animals on campus. After reviewing these materials, the Reference Group agreed to convene a Working Group to develop a shared set of policies and practices that could be adopted across the Ontario university sector relating to the use of animals on campus, including emotional support or comfort animals.

Other committees, such as the Ontario Committee on Student Affairs (OCSA), Council of Environmental Health and Safety Officers (CEHSO), and the AODA Coordinators Sub-Group, have expressed interest in consulting on this work.

MANDATE

The mandate of the Working Group was to develop a set of recommendations to be considered by Ontario Universities related to the presence of animals on campus.

The scope of the recommendations was to be determined by the Working Group. Animals on campus for research purposes were explicitly excluded from this work as it is under the oversight of the Canadian Council on Animal Care.

PRINCIPLES OF ACCOMODATION

The principles of accommodation outlined in the [Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability, 2016](#) and in the [Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy and guidelines on disability and the duty to accommodate, 2001](#) served as the foundational principles of the development of this guideline. Universities are committed to implementing processes that facilitate accommodation for individuals with service animals on campus.

CONFLICTING RIGHTS

It is acknowledged that as rights are better understood and exercised, there is an increased probability that when individuals or groups try to enjoy or exercise a right, some of those rights may come into conflict with the rights of others. This guideline has considered the [Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on competing human rights, 2012](#) in the recommendations and processes.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of these recommendations;

1. “disability” has the same meaning as in the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#) and the [Ontario Human Rights Commission's Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability, 2016](#).
2. “handler” refers to the person who has charge of the service animal. This would typically be the person whom the service animal is assisting with a disability. The handler may also be the owner.
3. “owner” refers to the legal owner of the service animal. The owner may also be the handler.
4. a “pet” refers to any animal kept for companionship or pleasure that is not a service animal.
5. an animal is a “service animal” for a person with a disability if (as outlined in the [Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards](#) under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)),
 - a. the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person’s disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
 - b. the person provides documentation from one of the regulated health professionals listed in the Integrated Accessibility Standards, confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.
6. “service dog” means a dog that is trained as a guide for a person with a disability or that is receiving training to be such a guide, and that has the qualifications prescribed in [Regulation 58: Guide Dogs](#), under the [Blind Persons’ Rights Act, 1990](#).

ADMINISTRATION OF ANIMALS ON CAMPUS

Recommendation 1

The University should have clearly outlined processes and/or behavioural expectations with respect to the presence of any and all animals (e.g. visitors to campus) on campus and for all owners and/or handlers.

Where possible, the University should outline any access restrictions for animals (residences, classrooms, labs etc.) on campus, any registration processes required for animals on campus, and behavioural expectations of animals, owners and/or handlers while on campus property etc.

It is further recommended that if a person should approach the University seeking an accommodation above and beyond the University's clearly defined expectations and/or restrictions, which the University engages in a separate process to evaluate, and - as appropriate - implement the accommodations.

It is recommended that the only service animals in training allowed on the University campus are service dogs.

Recommendation 2

The definition of "service animals" should include "emotional support, therapy and comfort animals" for the purposes of accommodation if the animal meets the service animal definition in [Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards](#) and documentation from one of the regulated health professionals listed in the Regulation is provided to confirm that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to their disability.

Emotional support, therapy and comfort animals are not currently defined by law in Ontario. When an accommodation requiring an animal meeting the existing service animal definition in [Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards](#), the University should engage in the accommodation process. The University may request appropriate documentation to support the accommodation request. For employees, the documentation should establish how the animal will help the individual perform the essential duties of their position. For students, the documentation should establish how the animal will help the student address the learning environment related functional limitations arising from their disabilities.

Recommendation 3

The University should have clearly outlined processes with respect to the registration, and re-registration on a regular basis, as appropriate, of service animals on campus.

Upon the inclusion of a service animal in a student or employee accommodation, a registration process should be undertaken for each service animal. A service animal should always refer to a specific animal, rather than a class or type of animal. This registration process should include the production of an identification card (including a photo) of the specific service animal and clarification of expectations for owners and/or handlers of service animals.

Specific items for consideration for inclusion in a registration process might include;

- the name, species, and size of the animal
- the confirmation of the health status of the animal
- the development of a regular health information update sharing cycle that is appropriate for the species and life stage of the animal
- emergency contact information, and/or an alternate caregiver on or near campus for the service animal
- confirmation of current campus residential status (i.e. in residence or no)
- a service animal behavioural contract to be signed by the owner and/or handler
- the duration of validity of registration and re-registration process, as appropriate
- a consent that appropriate information could be shared on a case by case basis with appropriate campus stakeholders for the purposes of implementing the required accommodation(s).

It is further recommended that universities, where possible, have a single centralized process and office responsible for the registration of a service animal on campus for students, and a separate process and office for employees.

Recommendation 4

Upon registration of a service animal, appropriate information should be shared on a case by case basis with appropriate campus stakeholders for the purposes of implementing the required accommodation(s).

Universities should ensure that all staff responsible for supporting the implementation of accommodations have appropriate training and resources available to them to inform their support and actions. Universities may want to identify the possible range of stakeholders, which could include but should not be limited to; health and safety professionals, academic areas, risk management, campus security, residence staff etc.

Recommendation 5

The University should have a clearly outlined process with respect to the verification of the status of a service animal on campus, and information should be provided to all campus community members regarding same.

Persons having a service animal on campus should not be subjected to repeated questioning related to their right to have a service animal. All questions should be referred to the office(s) responsible for the registration of service animals on campus to share information, as appropriate, with those members of the university community having responsibility for the implementation of the accommodation.

It is recommended that the only “authorized representatives” who may request documentation from the handler related to a service-animal, are those individuals in the office(s) responsible for the registration of service animals.

Further, it is recommended that a training tool and information resources be developed and provided to instructors who may have a service animal in their teaching environment, to assist those individuals in providing accurate information to all members of the class with respect to the rights and expectations related to having a service animal present in the learning environment.

Recommendation 6

Where health and safety may be put at risk via the presence of service animal, service animals may be denied entrance or their activities may be restricted to enter under certain conditions for the safety of the animal, the owner and/or handler, or other persons.

An individual risk assessment is required before such animal is approved for entry, and should be based on the animal species, animal size, nature of the facility, hazards that may be encountered, hazards that may be created by the animal, the duration and severity of the risk, the probability of harm or injury to a person or the animal, and the availability of risk mitigation.

It is noted that specialized training and/or resources may be required for one or more campus members to assist in the risk assessment associated with both clinical and high-risk areas. It is recommended that the University engage with subject matter experts in the planning and implementation of accommodations in clinical and/or high-risk areas.

OBLIGATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF ANIMALS ON CAMPUS

Recommendation 7

Owners and handlers of service animals must comply with relevant provincial legislation and local ordinances relating to topics including, but not restricted to, immunization, licensing, noise, waste management, at-large animals, dangerous animals, and keeping of exotic animals.

While municipal ordinances vary widely, specific provincial legislation for consideration includes;

- Owners and handlers of service animals must comply with the [Health Protection and Promotion Act, 1990](#), and the [Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1990](#) to ensure appropriate animal care.
- Owners and handlers of service dogs must comply with the [Dog Owners' Liability Act, 1990](#), which restricts ownership of pit bulls in Ontario and requires dog owners to take reasonable precautions to prevent dogs from behaving in a menacing or aggressive manner towards people and domestic animals.

Recommendation 8

Service animals should be regularly examined by a veterinarian to ensure they are in good health and have an appropriate preventive medicine program (e.g. immunization, parasite control). Specific immunization and parasite prevention requirements will vary with species and life-stage, but at a minimum, rabies vaccination must be required for dogs, cats and ferrets.

Service dogs and cats should be required to wear current license and rabies vaccination tags from the owner's municipality.

Recommendation 9

The owner and/or handler is solely responsible for the supervision of the service animal. When a service animal is on campus, and outside of the private individual living accommodations of the owner and/or handler, it should be under the direct control of the owner and/or handler.

For qualified service dogs, control can be demonstrated through close proximity in combination with the wearing of a harness and voice commands/hand signals; direct contact is not necessary.

For other dogs and species, direct contact is expected, and control can be demonstrated through

the use of a leash (not exceeding 6 feet in length, no extendable leashes), carrier/crate or an appropriate alternative restraint method. Exceptions should be made where these restrictions prevent the animal from performing their required duties, in which case it is expected that the owner and/or handler is in close proximity and that the animal can be kept under control using voice commands/hand signals.

Owners and/or handlers should ensure that service animals refrain from disturbing, through movements or vocalizations, the activities of others (including but not limited to teaching, research, service or administrative activities), and from causing physical damage to University facilities, or to the personal properties of others.

Service animals should stay with the owner and/or handler and should not be left on campus. Any time the owner and/or handler of the service animal leaves campus (e.g. overnight and/or during University breaks) the service animal should also leave.

Exceptions should be made if direct control or direct supervision is not possible (e.g. if a service animal is in an adjacent office to a lab as part of the accommodation).

See: Appendix A - Questions for consideration for service animal owners.

Recommendation 10

The owner and/or handler is liable and responsible for any costs, damages, injuries (to the handler or any other person) or harm caused by the service animal.

Recommendation 11

The care of a service animal should be solely the responsibility of its owner and/or handler.

Owners and/or handlers should be responsible for supporting animal well-being by providing a regular and appropriate schedule for food, water, exercise, mental stimulation, and elimination. Animals should not be permitted to run loose at any time unless the campus provides a specific, designated area for these activities. Animal excrement should be placed in an appropriate waste receptacle. Accidents should be cleaned up promptly, and where necessary, custodial services should be contacted for assistance. Animals should also be kept clean, and well-groomed to minimize the impact on others in the community.

The university should support, as appropriate, the owners of service animals on campus to care for their animals, which may include but is not limited to identification of areas where the above needs of the animals can be met.

CLINICAL AREAS

Recommendation 12

The University should have clearly outlined language in its agreements with clinical partners that identify the shared, positive obligation to adhere to the requirements set out by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act.

Clinical partners, while having a positive obligation to adhere to the requirements set out by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, also have other competing legislative requirements. Where information related to known risks and limitations may exist, it is advised that alternatives be considered for students to meet the bona fide academic requirements associated with the course. With these competing legislative requirements, it may be reasonable for the accommodation plan to be different in the clinical setting than in other settings.

CO-OPS AND PLACEMENTS

Recommendation 13

Where a co-op or placement is a course or program requirement, universities have an obligation to accommodate.

If a co-op or placement, however, is not an academic requirement, the legal obligations of the University may change related to the duty to accommodate. Where possible, it is suggested that the University should make every effort to provide opportunities for all students that are equitable and accessible.

HIGH-RISK AREAS

Recommendation 14

Where hazardous materials are used or stored, service animals may be denied entrance or their activities may be restricted to enter under certain conditions for the safety of the animal, lab users or the general public.

An individual risk assessment is required before such animal is approved for entry, and should be based on the animal species, animal size, nature of the facility, hazards that may be encountered, the duration and severity of the risk, the probability of harm or injury, and the availability of risk mitigation.

It is recommended that where risk can be sufficiently managed to allow access, that;

- the animal should be located in as safe an area as possible to mitigate the risk of exposure to hazardous materials (e.g. adjacent office, laboratory entry) and that the accommodation plan should include any relevant control measures that are deemed necessary to ensure safety
- if necessary, a disposable mat - preventing contact with materials on the floor - should be available and placed where the animal will lay, and stay safe during the lab period,
- an emergency response plan should be prepared to take into account the animal (e.g. animal is exposed to hazardous material or injured, a spill in the laboratory, evacuation of the laboratory or the building),
- no contact with the animal in the lab is allowed (unless necessary) to avoid the potential for transfer of hazardous materials,
- a clear process is put in place for incident reporting related to the service animal (e.g. exposure, injury).

Recommendation 15

Service animals should not be allowed in animal facilities or in laboratories where research animals are handled, where [biological agents of risk group 2 or higher](#) are stored or manipulated (i.e. CL2 or higher), where biological specimens that might contain risk group 2 or higher pathogens are collected or processed, where radioactive materials (open sources) are used, and/or where [high hazard materials](#) (i.e. chemicals) are used and represent a risk of exposure to the animal.

Where a person is unable to be accompanied by their service animal due to the results of a risk assessment, consideration should be given to;

- an employee in determining to what extent their presence in that space represents a

bona fide work requirement, and commensurately what other options may exist for the employee, and

- alternatives available to a student to obtain a comparable learning experience without having to access the facility/space in question.

RESIDENCES AND UNIVERSITY-OWNED HOUSING

Recommendation 16

The residence application process should not require applicants to provide detailed information related to their diagnosis of disability.

Persons who have not yet registered their service animal, or who have not yet provided medical information related to their need for a service animal in residence, should be directed to the office(s) that manage the institutional accommodation and registration processes, rather than working separately with the residence complex.

Once a service animal is registered via the institutional process, relevant information should be shared with campus stakeholders for the purposes of implementing the required accommodation(s). This information sharing should include the campus residence staff, as appropriate.

Recommendation 17

The residence application process should clearly outline the university's obligation to provide appropriate accommodation and the right of the university to manage the process to meet this obligation.

Following the development of an accommodation plan involving the introduction of a service animal into the University residence complex, the University should share appropriate information with residents who may be affected.

Recommendation 18

All owners and/or handlers of registered service animals on campus who reside in a university-owned facility, or who are applying to live in a university-run residential complex, should understand any space-related limitations that may apply to their service animal, outside of meeting their disability-related needs.

Residence is a community space often where student independent living space is small and shared community space is prioritized. Within this context, consideration should be given to the appropriateness of service animals in common areas for any reason other than addressing the disability-related needs of the owner and/or handler. Any limitations to the service animal related to shared spaces and common areas should be detailed.

Recommendation 19

In keeping with recommendation 7, appropriate locations for owners and/or handlers living on campus to be able to fulfil their support responsibilities related to the well-being of the service animal should be identified.

These could include accessible and reasonably proximal locations for food storage, eating, exercise, bathing, and elimination/waste for the service animal.

APPENDIX A – QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION FOR OWNERS OF SERVICE ANIMALS

1. Specific areas for handlers to consider when determining whether an animal is appropriate to act as a service animal in a campus environment:
 - a. Has the animal been properly socialized with people varying in features such as height, gender, skin colour, facial hair, clothing type, and accessibility items such as wheelchairs and canes?
 - b. Has the animal been properly socialized with a variety of animals including prey species?
 - c. Is the animal species prone to aggression, or chasing or predatory behaviour that might be dangerous to other animals?
 - d. Will the animal interact appropriately with other service animals on campus if they frequent similar environments? It is important to recognize that responses can vary in confined spaces, such as in classrooms with limited space.
 - e. Is the animal highly food-motivated, and if so are they sufficiently well trained to abstain from food stealing?
 - f. Is the animal sufficiently mature and of an appropriate temperament to avoid impulsive behaviours that might be disruptive (e.g., barking, jumping up) or damaging to property (e.g., chewing)? Similarly, are they sufficiently trained to avoid elimination accidents?
 - g. Has the animal been spayed or neutered? For example, intact female dogs can attract excessive attention from male dogs.
 - h. Has the animal been appropriately trained to ensure that they are fully under the control of the owner through the use of voice commands/hand signals? This includes consistent and immediate responses within a busy environment to commands that are important within the campus context including heel, sit/down, stay, come, drop it, and leave it.

2. Good animal welfare depends on avoiding situations that evoke negative affective states such as fear and stress and meeting the behavioural and physiological needs of the animal.
 - a. Is the animal comfortable in the campus environments that it will be expected to frequent? Attention should be paid to the level of activity, crowding and noise in these spaces relative to the needs of the species and individual. Consideration should also be given to socialization with other people and animals since a lack of socialization is often associated with fear.
 - b. Is the animal healthy and at no greater risk for zoonotic pathogen (viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites that can be transmitted between humans and animals) exposure than other animals?
 - c. Are the animal's size and biology suitable for daily activities (e.g. a reptile may not be able to live in a colder climate, a large dog may be challenging in tight quarters)?
 - d. Can the handler ensure the well-being of the animal by appropriately meeting their needs within the campus environment? Attention should be paid to on-campus opportunities for feeding, watering, eliminating, and providing exercise and mental stimulation for the animal within the restrictions of the employee's or student's schedule and activities.



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