

## **Austin College Policy Regarding the Use of Animals for Accommodation**

It is the policy of Austin College to provide equal access and reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities to participate in any program, service, or opportunity provided by the campus; and to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADA), the Fair Housing Act, and other applicable federal and state regulations that prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. Under the Fair Housing Act, persons with disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation of an assistance animal, including an emotional support animal in housing when its use is necessary to afford a person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling and/or the common areas of a dwelling. With respect to a request for an assistance or emotional support animal, Austin College will determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether such an animal is a reasonable accommodation on campus.

### **Service Dog Defined**

A “service dog” is 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. Service dogs are trained to do specific tasks or “work” for the benefit of a person with a disability. This work or task the dog performs must be directly related to the handler’s disability.

Service dogs are working animals not pets. Examples of service dogs include, but are not limited to, guide dogs, hearing dogs, and seizure response dogs. A service dog accompanies a person with a disability at all times, unlike a therapy/emotional support animal (ESA). A service dog is an animal with a good temperament and disposition, has reliable, predictable behavior, and is selected and trained to accompany people with disabilities.

[See the Service Dog Policy](#)

### **Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Defined**

An emotional support animal (ESA) is an animal that provides comfort to an individual with a disability upon the recommendation of a healthcare or mental health professional. An emotional support animal does not assist a person with a disability with activities of daily living, is not required to be trained to perform work or tasks, and does not accompany a person with a disability at all times. ESAs can be species other than dogs. The role of an ESA is to live with a student and alleviate the symptoms of an individual’s disability to provide equal opportunities to use and enjoy college housing. An emotional support animal is not considered to be a service dog under this policy or applicable law.

[See the Emotional Support Animal \(ESA\) Policy](#)

### **Conflicting Disabilities**

Students who have allergic reactions to service dogs and/or emotional support animals (ESAs) that are substantial enough to qualify as a disability must follow procedures to document a medical/physical disability and request specific accommodations related to such disability-related needs. Austin College will consider disability-related needs of all parties involved, and explore reasonable accommodations and seek resolution as efficiently and expeditiously as possible.