

SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY

American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine (“AUC” or “University”) is committed to promoting full participation and equal access to University programs and activities for individuals with disabilities. Pursuant to these commitments, service animals (defined below) are permitted on campus for persons with disabilities in accordance with the requirements of this policy. Prior to arrival on campus, an individual with a service animal may but is not required to, contact AUC’s Accommodation Administrator to notify the institution that they will be bringing a service animal. For Medical Sciences students, AUC’s Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Dr. Scott Rinker, is the Accommodation Administrator. Dr. Rinker may be contacted at 721-545-2298 or srinker@aucmed.edu.

In any case AUC has shared purview over a space/activity with the government of St. Maarten, or in spaces where the purview is solely that of the St. Maarten government, AUC will defer to the government regulation. In the case where local government law takes precedence over AUC policy, students will work with Dr. Scott Rinker for options and potential modifications.

Definitions

"Service Animal" means any guide dog, signal dog or other dog or miniature horse that is individually trained or undergoing training to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. “Disability” is defined below. Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks of daily living for an individual with a disability. A service animal is a working animal, not a pet. To be considered a service animal, the work or task the animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the individual’s disability. Although the animal must be trained, it is not required to be licensed or certified by a state or local government or particular training program to be a service animal. 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 the purposes of this definition.

Examples of work or tasks performed by a service animal include, but are not limited to:

- Guiding individuals with impaired vision
- Alerting individuals with impaired hearing to the presence of other people or sounds
- Assisting with opening doors or pushing buttons
- Aiding individuals with impaired mobility by steadying the individual when walking
- Pulling a wheelchair
- Retrieving dropped items

- Alerting and protecting an individual who is having a seizure
- Reminding an individual with a mental health impairment to take prescribed medications
- Recognizing that an individual is about to have a psychiatric or neurological episode and responding in a manner that prevents or interrupts the episode or otherwise protects the person until the episode subsides
- Providing minimal rescue or non-violent protection work

"Disability" means a physical or mental health impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

"Individual with a Disability" refers to an individual with a disability or who has a record of a disability or who is regarded as having a disability.

"Handler" means either the trainer of a service animal or the individual who utilizes a service animal to perform work or tasks pertaining to that individual's disability.

Requirements of Handlers & Service Animals

Service animals are permitted inside AUC buildings and facilities pursuant to the requirements below. Outside of AUC buildings, animals are permitted to transiently use other outdoor campus areas, e.g., walkways, parking lots and streets, while in transit to and from the grassy area or the destination building or site.

- The service animal must be vaccinated and licensed as required by local ordinance.
- Service animals must be accompanied by the handler.
- The handler must remain near the service animal.
- The service animal must be restrained on a leash at all times unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. It should be noted, however, that service animals that leave their handlers could be indicating that the handler needs help or medical assistance and the animal should be followed back to the handler.
- The service animal should be responsive to commands and be under the full control of the handler at all times. The handler must ensure that the service animal is behaving, and neither interfering with the day-to-day operations and business of the AUC community (e.g, not barking regularly), nor posing a threat to others (e.g., not growling or biting). Handlers whose service animal does not behave appropriately are expected to remove the animal from the immediate environment if asked by AUC colleagues. Instances of inappropriate behavior may result in a determination by the Accommodation Administrator that the service animal is no longer allowed on campus.
- The handler is responsible for designating an alternate caregiver on location in case of emergency.

- The handler is responsible for the care and feeding of the service animal and immediately cleaning up waste or soliciting proper assistance to clean up waste of their service animal.
- The handler of the service animal is solely responsible for any damage to persons or property caused by the service animal and assumes such liability when bringing the animal on campus.
- A service animal is not required to have a special harness/collar, documentation of training or identifying tags.

There may be situations where the service animal's presence would fundamentally alter the nature of a particular service, program, or business of the University. When these situations are identified by the Accommodation Administrator, the handler and the University must work together to determine how best to maintain the learning environment while still appropriately accommodating the handler.

Visitors and their service animals are expected to comply with the requirements of handlers and service animals listed above.

Interacting with Service Animals

The handler may request that others avoid: petting or addressing his/her service animal as it may distract it from the task at hand, feeding the service animal, deliberately startling the service animal and separating or attempting to separate the handler from his/her service animal.

To the extent possible, the service animal should not block an aisle or passageway for fire and/or emergency egress.

Permissible Inquiries

Members of the AUC community who have questions or concerns regarding the behavior of a service animal or the presence of a service animal on campus or within an AUC facility should not direct their concerns to the individual and/or handler. Rather, they are to direct all questions or concerns to the Accommodation Administrator, Dr. Scott Rinker, at 721-545-2298 or srinker@aucmed.edu. AUC colleagues shall not ask any questions about the individual's disability.

Health of the Service Animal

The service animal must have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian. A service animal must be clean and groomed and measures should be taken for flea and odor control. Service animals that are ill or in poor health should not be taken into public areas. A handler with an ill service animal may be required to remove the animal from AUC property at the discretion of the Accommodation Administrator.

Campus Access for Service Animals

A service animal is permitted to accompany the handler anywhere the handler goes on campus with exceptions in areas where specifically prohibited due to health, environmental or safety hazards. Any protective wear required for the service animal will be at the cost of the handler to obtain. For information on purchasing protective wear, contact the Accommodation Administrator. AUC administration should contact the Accommodation Administrator to identify areas which may pose a danger to the wellbeing of the service animal or when the animal's presence fundamentally alters the nature of a program or activity. Upon identification of prohibited areas, the Accommodation Administrator will notify the handler.

Management of Service Animal off AUC Campuses

Management of a service animal off AUC's campuses is beyond the scope of this policy. AUC defers to the policies of individual clinical training sites regarding service animals. For questions regarding a service animal at the clinical training site, contact Dr. Kimberly Kirkland.

Conflicting Needs

Individuals with medical needs impacted by the presence of animals (e.g., respiratory conditions, allergies, or psychological conditions) should contact the Accommodation Administrator, Dr. Scott Rinker, at 721-545-2298 or srinker@aucmed.edu.

Inquiries or Complaints

General inquiries or questions should be directed to the Accommodation Administrator, Dr. Scott Rinker, at 721-545-2298 or srinker@aucmed.edu. Student complaints and escalations should be directed to the Office of Equity and Access at equity@adtalem.com.

Emotional Support Animals and Therapy Animals

Questions about emotional support animals, requests for accommodation, and therapy animals should be directed to the Accommodation Administrator, Dr. Scott Rinker, at 721-545-2298 or srinker@aucmed.edu.