



Thiel College **Service and Assistance Animal Policy**

Policy Statement

Thiel College is committed to providing those members of the Thiel College community with disabilities equal access to programs, services, and physical facilities. It is acknowledged that some members of the Thiel College community with disabilities may require the use of service or assistance animals while at Thiel. Set forth below are guidelines concerning the appropriate use of and protocols associated with Service Animals and Assistance Animals. Thiel College reserves the right to amend these guidelines as needed, with or without prior notice.

Members of the Thiel College community who are students and require the use of a service or assistance animal should contact the Disability Resource Center at 724-589-2063. Members of the Thiel Community who are faculty and staff and require the use of a service or assistance animal should contact Human Resources at 724-589-2858. Thiel College will determine, on a case-by-case basis in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, whether such an animal is a reasonable accommodation on campus. Where it is not readily apparent that an animal is a service animal as defined by the ADA, or an assistance animal under the Fair Housing Act, Thiel College may require sufficient information and documentation to determine whether the animal qualifies as a service or assistance animal under the applicable law.

I. Definitions

- A. Service Animal:** A dog that a member of the Thiel College community with a disability requires for use on campus that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of that individual, due to a disability such as a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.
- The work or tasks performed by a trained 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, or assisting an individual during a seizure.
 - 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.
- B. Assistance Animal:** An animal that a member of the Thiel College community with a disability requires due to their disability for use in their Thiel residence in order to have an equal opportunity to use their residence/dwelling or to participate in the housing service or program. The animal provides emotional support which alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. There must be an identifiable and medically-indicated relationship between the individual's disability and the assistance the animal provides.
- The Disability Resource Center Coordinator will make an individualized assessment of each proposed emotional support animal. Dogs must be trained and housebroken. The use of "puppy pads" will not be permitted.

- C. **Pet:** A pet is an animal kept for ordinary use and companionship. A pet is not considered a service or assistance animal. Pets are not permitted in the facilities of Thiel College. Any pets on the grounds of Thiel College must be under appropriate restraint (leash, cage, etc.) and must be in close proximity to the owner at all times. Thiel College may, in its sole discretion, require the removal of pets on the College grounds for any reason including, but not limited to, failure to be appropriately restrained.
- D. **Owner:** The owner is the member of the Thiel College community with a disability who has received approval from the Disability Resource Center for use of a service or assistance animal as an accommodation.

II. Requesting the use of a service or assistance animal as an accommodation due to a disability:

Students who need to request the accommodation of use of a service or assistance animal should contact the Disability Resource Center at 724-589-2063, located in the Learning Commons area of the Library, Room 5. Students are required to complete the *Service and Assistance Animal Contract* and submit supporting documentation on the letterhead of a qualified physician and/or the *Housing Accommodation Request Form* and have a licensed professional (as outlined on Disability Services Information Form) fill out the *Diagnostician's Housing Accommodation Request Form*. The need to complete housing forms is dependent on whether or not the student will be residing on campus. All completed forms and signed waivers must be turned in to the Disability Resource Center for the student with a disability to utilize the service animal on college grounds and/or to receive a housing accommodation. These forms may be obtained from the Disability Resource Center or from the Student Life Office. Employees who need to request the accommodation of use of a service or assistance animal should contact Human Resources at 724-589-2858. For student requests, the Thiel College Housing Committee will determine on a case- by-case basis, and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, whether the animal is a reasonable and appropriate accommodation for the identified disability.

Entering freshmen/new students are encouraged to place their request for use of a service or assistance animal in Thiel College residences by **June 1** for the Fall term. Upperclass students requesting the use of a service or assistance animal in Thiel College residences should do so prior to the class housing sign-up dates. Owners who are in the process of requesting the use of a service or assistance animal are not permitted to have the animal on campus until the process is complete. Students receiving approval for a service or assistance animal to occupy Thiel College Residences will be required to make the standard \$100.00 deposit against damages that the animal may cause. If no damages are incurred, the deposit will be refunded following a passing checkout process upon graduation or departure from Thiel at the end of the semester or year. If the damages exceed the \$100.00 deposit amount, the student will be billed for the additional costs.

- A. **Service animals:** The Disability Services Office will inquire if the dog is required because of a disability and how the dog assists the individual, including what work or tasks the dog has been individually trained to perform. It will also require documentation on the letterhead of a treating physician or qualified mental health provider which permits Thiel College to determine that: (1) the individual has a disability and that (2) there is an identifiable relationship between the disability and the assistance that the animal provides. Determination of reasonable accommodation will include, but not be limited to, consideration of the following: whether the animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others; whether the animal poses an undue financial and administrative burden on Thiel College; or whether the animal fundamentally alters the nature of any of Thiel College's programs or operations. Requirements will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, following an interactive process between the Coordinator of the Disability Resource Center and the student with a disability.
- B. **Assistance animals:** The Disability Resource Center will require documentation on the letterhead of a treating physician or qualified mental health provider which permits Thiel College to determine that: (1) the individual has a disability (2) the animal is necessary for the individual to have an equal opportunity to use the Thiel College residence, and that (3) there is an identifiable relationship between the disability and the assistance that the animal provides. Determination of reasonable accommodation includes, but is not limited to, consideration of the following: whether the animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others; whether the animal

poses an undue financial and administrative burden on Thiel College; or, whether the animal fundamentally alters the nature of any of Thiel College's programs or operations. Requirements will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, following an interactive process between the Coordinator of the Disability Resource Center and the student with a disability.

- C. Paper Requirements for Animal:** Before a service or assistance animal is permitted on campus as an accommodation, proper paperwork must be on file with the Disability Resource Center or Human Resources.
- 1. Health and vaccination records:** The animal must have an annual exam from a licensed veterinarian that does not identify the existence of any health issues that would prevent the animal from providing the necessary assistance to the individual. The animal must also have updated vaccinations where required by law, including but not limited to, the general maintenance vaccine series and any vaccinations deemed necessary by a licensed veterinarian. The animal must also wear a rabies vaccination tag.
 - 2. Licensing:** Owner is responsible to know and adhere to all local or home town licensing laws and tag laws.

III. Owner responsibilities regarding use of a service or assistance animal

A. Members of the Thiel community with a Service Animal: The care and supervision of the animal is solely the responsibility of its owner. The owner must be in full control of the animal at all times, as outlined below. Service animals in Thiel housing may not be left for extended periods of time either unattended or to be cared for by someone other than the owner. The owner is expected to insure the health, safety, and humane treatment of the animal and submit annual proof of vaccinations where required by law to the Disability Services Office or Human Resources. Thiel Student Life Staff shall intervene if the animal is found unattended, in need of care, or is causing a disturbance.

- 1. Under control of owner:**
 - The animal must be under the owner's direct physical control with a harness, leash, or other tether, unless the owner is unable either because of a disability to use these, or the use of one of these would interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks. If so, the service animal must be otherwise under the owner's control (e.g., voice control, signals, or other effective means).
 - The animal's behavior must not be disruptive to its surroundings or other members of the Thiel community. Disruptive behavior includes, but is not limited to, jumping on people, barking, growling, taking food from dining area tables, or taking personal belongings of individuals other than the owner.
- 2. Proximity to owner:** While on campus, in areas including classes, public areas of residences, food venues, or assembled gatherings, the animal must be in close physical proximity to the owner. While in the classroom, the animal should remain in the laying-stay position unless this position would interfere with the service animal's functions as it relates to the student with the disability.
- 3. Identification:** For practical purposes, we encourage students with disabilities who use service animals to identify the working status of the animal with a harness, cape, or identification tag that readily identifies its working status.
- 4. Clean up and grooming requirements:** The care of the animal is solely the responsibility of its owner. The animal must be housebroken. The owner shall:

- Always carry equipment sufficient to clean up the dog's waste and immediately remove and dispose of the waste in any of the dumpsters located on the campus. Cat litter must be placed into a sealed or tied bag and then disposed of in any of the dumpsters located on campus. Members of the Thiel community who are not physically able to pick up and dispose of animal waste are responsible for making all necessary arrangements for assistance. Thiel College is not responsible for this task.
- Keep the animal clean, well-groomed, and free of pests. If Thiel College facilities are used to bathe the animal, the owner will clean the area when finished.

B. Members of the Thiel community with an assistance animal in campus housing: The animal is permitted only within the owner's residence. The supervision of the animal is solely the responsibility of its owner. The owner must be in full control of the animal at all times, as outlined above in Section III.A. Assistance animals in Thiel College housing may not be left for extended periods of time either unattended or to be cared for by someone other than the owner. The owner must ensure that the animal is housebroken and observe cleanup and grooming requirements outlined above in Section III.A. The owner is expected to ensure the health, safety, and humane treatment of the animal and submit annual proof of vaccinations where required by law as required to the Disability Services Office or Human Resources. Thiel Student Life Staff shall intervene if the animal is found unattended, in need of care, or causing a disturbance.

IV. Lack of cleanliness and damages caused by the service or assistance animal

All members of the Thiel College community are responsible for any additional cleaning required or damage to Thiel property which they cause. An animal's owner shall also be responsible for any additional cleaning required or damage to Thiel College property resulting from the possession of the service or assistance animal.

- A. The owner's residence may be inspected for fleas, ticks, or other pests during the regularly scheduled housing inspection. If fleas, ticks, or other pests are detected through inspection, the residence or work area will be treated using approved fumigation methods by a college-approved pest control service. The owner will be billed for the expense of any pest treatment.
- B. The owner's residence may be inspected to ensure that it is being properly cleaned and that sanitary and safe conditions are being maintained. If required, the owner will be billed for the expense of the additional cleaning required.
- C. The owner's residence may be inspected for physical damage during the regularly-scheduled housing inspection. The owner will be billed for the expense of any damage to Thiel College residence or Thiel College furnishings within the residence that are caused by the animal.

V. Managing disabling conditions and concerns of all members of the Thiel College community:

- A. Within Thiel College facilities, members of the Thiel College community with medical condition(s) who are affected by dogs (e.g., respiratory diseases, asthma, severe allergies) are asked to contact the Disability Resource Center or Human Resources if they have a health or safety-related concern about exposure to a dog in a Thiel College facility and require accommodation.
- B. The health and well-being of all roommates, suitemates, and building occupants will be considered.
 - Members of the Thiel College community with medical condition(s) that are affected by animals (e.g., respiratory diseases, asthma, severe allergies) are asked to contact the Disability Resource Center or

Human Resources if they have a health or safety-related concern about exposure to an animal and require accommodation. Students are encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center as early as possible to afford adequate time to make other housing arrangements, if needed.

- Roommates will be made aware of the planned presence of an animal in their residence by the student. They will be asked to sign an acknowledgment stating that they understand they will be living in the presence of an animal and are aware of how to address concerns, if needed.

VI. Exclusion of a service or assistance animal

A. Reasons for consideration of exclusion of a service or assistance animal:

Thiel College may pursue the process for determining if a service or assistance animal should be excluded from campus for the following reasons:

- The animal is not under the direct physical control of the owner.
- The animal's behavior is disruptive to its surroundings or other members of the Thiel College community.
- The animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others.
- The animal is not housebroken, litter trained or kept in a cage where waste can be managed effectively.
- The animal's presence fundamentally alters the nature of a class, program or activity.
- The owner fails to comply with any of her/his responsibilities under this policy.

B. Process for consideration of exclusion of a service or assistance animal:

Any member of the Thiel College community may submit a complaint about a service or assistance animal, identifying one or more concerns in the areas listed above in Section VI.A.

1. Persons with concerns are to contact a member of Public Safety or Student Life (contact Human Resources if the complaint involves a Thiel employee). A statement will be taken.
2. An investigation will be commenced by the appropriate department and a determination will be made with respect to any alleged violations of this policy. The determination will be provided to the owner and the individual submitting the complaint.
3. If the investigation determines that any provision of this policy has been violated by a student, the matter will be referred to the Student Life. If the investigation determines that any provision of this policy has been violated by an employee, the matter will be referred to Human Resources for further investigation.
4. Any finding substantiating the violation of this policy may also lead to the exclusion of the animal.