



**Policy Chapter:** Chapter 4 Administration

**Policy Number and Title:** 04.026 Animals on Campus

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## **I. Policy Statement**

The University of North Texas (UNT) is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors by managing the presence of animals on university property and in its facilities, while providing people with disabilities who use service and comfort animals the opportunity to receive the benefit of the tasks these animals provide or the therapeutic support they offer in accordance with the requirements of federal law.

## **II. Application of Policy**

Students, employees, applicants and visitors. This policy does not apply to animals used by law enforcement officers in the carrying out of their duties.

## **III. Policy Definitions**

### **A. Accommodations**

“Accommodations,” in this policy, means reasonable modifications or adjustments to the tasks, environment, or the way things are usually done that enables individuals with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to participate in an academic program or job responsibilities.

### **B. Animal Exhibit**

“Animal Exhibit,” in this policy, means the display or use of a live animal in a public setting on university property for the purpose of entertainment, marketing, performance, presentation, or for purposes other than those defined by UNT policy.

### **C. Approved Trainer**

“Approved Trainer(s),” in this policy, means a representative of an organization generally recognized by agencies involved in the rehabilitation of persons who are disabled as reputable and competent to provide training for service animals, and/or their handlers.

### **D. Comfort Animal**

“Comfort Animal” and “Emotional Support Animal,” in this policy, means an animal that provides emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship and that a health care provider has recommended as an accommodation for a student with a disability. The comfort provided by these animals does not constitute work or tasks and Comfort Animals are not Service Animals for purposes of this policy.

### **E. Employee**

“Employee,” in this policy, means an individual holding a position with a non-student title, including staff, faculty, professional librarians, and employees under contract.

**F. University Official**

“University Official,” in this policy, is an employee who, by nature of their job responsibility, is able to represent or act on behalf of their unit as it relates to the scope of their work or work environment.

**G. Owner**

“Owner,” in this policy, means an individual with a disability who is the owner and user, or trainer of a Service Animal or Comfort Animal, or the owner or individual bringing an animal onto university property.

**H. Person with a Disability**

“Person with a Disability,” in this policy, means a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; who has a record of such impairment; or who is regarded as having such an impairment.

**I. Pet**

“Pet,” in this policy, means a domesticated or tamed animal that is kept as a companion. On-campus residents are not permitted to keep pets, other than fish, in university residence halls.

**J. Service Animal**

“Service Animal,” in this policy, means a dog--or in rare situations, a miniature horse-- that has been 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. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained, or untrained, are not Service Animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a 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, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors.

**K. Service Animal in Training**

“Service Animal in Training,” in this policy, means an animal undergoing training by an approved trainer and/or the animal’s handler to become a service animal. In the state of Texas, a service animal in training shall not be denied admittance to any public facility when

accompanied by an approved trainer.

**L. Student**

“Student,” in this policy, means an individual who has applied for admission or readmission to the university; who is registered or enrolled in one or more courses for credit at the university; or who currently is not enrolled but has a continuing academic relationship with the university.

**M. Therapy Animal**

“Therapy Animal,” in this policy, means a dog that holds a current registration or certification, is on an animal-assisted therapy team with a qualified university employee, and is being used in an official university program or service for a university purpose.

**IV. Policy Responsibilities**

**A. Service Animals**

1. General or Public Access

Service Animals are allowed in university buildings, classrooms, residence halls, dining areas, recreational facilities, meetings, activities, and events when accompanied by a Person with a Disability and the Service Animal is trained to provide, and does provide, a specific service to that person that is directly related to the person’s disability.

- a. Service Animals may not be permitted if the animal poses a substantial and direct threat to the health or safety of others or when the animal’s presence will require a substantial alteration to the nature of a university program or service.
- b. The accompaniment of a Person with a Disability by a Service Animal in a location with health and safety restrictions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate department representative(s) in collaboration with the Department of Human Resources or the Office of Disability Access.
- c. A Person with a Disability will be limited to one Service Animal unless an additional animal is necessary to provide reasonable accommodation.
- d. University Residence Halls

A student with a Service Animal or Service Animal in Training who intends to reside on campus with the animal must notify the Department of Housing and Residence Life of the need for a Service Animal’s presence in advance of beginning residency. Such notification allows the university to make appropriate arrangements and offer assistance prior to the student’s arrival on campus. To evaluate the request for a Service Animal in Training, students must provide a letter on official letterhead from the affiliated organization attesting to their competence as a trainer. In addition, students are required to submit documentation verifying the animal’s current training status, proof of the animal’s health and vaccination records, and

confirmation that the animal is housebroken.

## 2. Inquiries Regarding Service Animals

Individuals who are accompanied by a Service Animal must not be asked to identify the nature or extent of their disability. Regarding a Service Animal:

- a. University Officials will not inquire about the qualifications of a Service Animal when it is readily apparent that an animal is trained to do work or to perform a task for a Person with a Disability (*e.g.*, the dog is observed guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling a person's wheelchair, or providing assistance with stability or balance to a person with an observable mobility disability).
- b. If it is not readily apparent that an animal is performing work or a task on behalf of a Person with a Disability, University Officials may only inquire:
  - i. whether the animal is required because of a disability; and,
  - ii. what work or task the animal has been trained to perform.
- c. Individuals are not required to have a letter of accommodation to use a Service Animal at the university.
- d. University Officials will not require documentation of a Service Animal's certification or training as a Service Animal.

## 3. Responsibilities of Service Animal/Service Animal in Training and Owner

- a. Service Animal/Service Animal in Training owners are financially responsible for damage or injury to others caused by their animal, including clean-up and disposal of animal waste and replacement or repair of property, and must take appropriate precautions to prevent property damage and/or injury to others while on university property.
- b. If a Service Animal/Service Animal in Training is disruptive in the classroom, a University Official may ask the owner and their animal to leave the premises immediately. If the owner does not cooperate, the University Official can submit a misconduct report and the Dean of Students will handle the issue through the conduct process.
- c. Service Animals/Service Animals in Training must be under the control of the owner at all times, with the exception of brief absences (*e.g.*, bathroom or shower breaks). Any Service Animal/Service Animal in Training found unattended on university property may be seized by animal control officers or other authorized persons. Owners are responsible for any impound and/or license fees required to secure the release of their animals.
  - i. A Service Animal/Service Animal in Training should be on a leash when not providing needed service.

- ii. To the extent possible the Service Animal/Service Animal in Training should be unobtrusive to other individuals and the learning, living, working environment.
    - iii. A Service Animal/Service Animal in Training may not be left tied or tethered out of the presence of its owner.
    - iv. Service Animals/Service Animals in Training are not permitted to block aisles or passageways or fire egress.
    - v. To the extent possible the Owner should ensure that the animal does not sniff people, dining tables, or the personal belongings of others.
  - d. The cost of care, arrangements and well-being of Service Animals/Service Animals in Training are the sole responsibility of the Owner, including keeping the animal free from fleas and ticks or other pests that may cause infestation.
  - e. Cleaning up after a Service Animal/Service Animal in Training is the sole responsibility of the owner. If the Owner is not physically able to clean up after a Service Animal/Service Animal in Training, the owner must delegate this responsibility to another individual who is capable of meeting this requirement at the owner's expense.
  - f. The Service Animal/Service Animal in Training Owner is responsible for complying with any relevant city, county, and/or state license and leash laws while the Service Animal/Service Animal in Training is on university premises.
4. Service Animal/Service Animal in Training Requirements

a. Vaccinations

Service animals must have required vaccinations or licenses pursuant to local law and must wear a rabies vaccination tag, if applicable.

b. Licensing

The owner must abide by current city, county and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to the licensing, vaccination, and other requirements of animal ownership applicable to the Owner's species of Service Animal/Service Animal in Training. It is the Owner's responsibility to know and understand all applicable ordinances, laws, and regulations in addition to university policies applicable to their Service Animal/Service Animal in Training. The university has the right to request documentation of compliance with such ordinances, laws and/or regulations, which may include presentation of vaccination certificate(s), registration, or licensing documentation.

c. Documentation

The university reserves the right to require updated veterinary records or other

evidence of the health of the animal at any time. For Service Animals in Training, trainers must be approved by the University.

## 5. Workplace Accommodations and Access

### a. Service Animals

An employee or applicant seeking information or requesting an ADA workplace accommodation for a Service Animal in the workplace should contact the UNT System Office of Equal Opportunity. A request for workplace accommodation will follow the outlined guidance in [UNT Policy 05.011 Employment of Individuals with Disabilities and Workplace Accommodations](#).

### b. Service Animals in Training

An employee or applicant requesting to bring a Service Animal in Training to the workplace should contact the UNT System Office of Equal Opportunity.

## 6. Exceptions

Requested exceptions related to Section IV.A of this policy should be submitted to the Assistant Vice President of the Office of Equal Opportunity or their designee.

## ***B. Comfort Animals***

### 1. Access

No Comfort Animal will be permitted in university housing without express prior approval from the Office of Disability Access and Department of Housing and Residence Life.

- a. Approved Comfort Animals must be contained within the campus housing room of the owner, except when transported outside the residential area in an animal carrier or controlled on a leash or harness.
- b. A Comfort Animal is not permitted to accompany a university employee into their workplace, or any other university building, unless that building is the employee's assigned university residence.
- c. A Comfort Animal will be an unreasonable accommodation if the Comfort Animal presents an undue financial or administrative burden on the university, poses a substantial and direct threat to personal or public safety, or constitutes a fundamental alteration of the nature of a service or program of the university.

### 2. Requests for Comfort Animals

Requests for accommodation with a Comfort Animal must be made through the Office of Disability Access. Non-student employees who are required to live on campus as a condition of their employment will file their requests with the UNT System Office of Equal Opportunity as a workplace accommodation.

- a. The approval process will require, in addition to other information:
  - i. Current and appropriate documentation from a physician or licensed mental health professional that:
    - a. verifies the student is a Person with a Disability;
    - b. describes how the animal assists the individual; and
    - c. shows the relationship between the individual's disability and the need for the assistance.
  - ii. Veterinary records or other evidence acceptable to the Office of Disability Access verifying that the animal is in good health and is current with respect to all vaccinations, medications, or other health-related matters required or recommended by veterinarians regarding the breed or type of animal in question. This includes verification of monthly flea prevention treatment for the animal, as appropriate.
- b. Students living in university housing will be permitted only one Comfort Animal at a time.
- c. The approved Comfort Animal is allowed in university housing only as long as it is necessary for the resident's disability.
- d. Comfort Animal approval is for a specific animal; therefore, a student must request approval for a replacement animal, if necessary. The university may request the owner remove the animal from campus within 48 hours of notification if an animal begins residency in a university residence hall prior to approval of the Office of Disability Access and the Department of Housing and Residence Life. If the animal is not removed as requested, University Officials may consider the animal a trespasser and contact the appropriate City of Denton authorities to remove the animal from campus. Any costs associated with removal of the animal from UNT property is the responsibility of the animal's owner.
- e. Per [UNT Policy 16.001 Disability Accommodations for Students and Academic Units](#), a grievance of a denied request for a Comfort Animal may be made by filing a grievance with the Office of Disability Access. If the student is not satisfied with the decision reached through formal or informal resolution, a complaint may be filed with the campus ADA Coordinator in EO/TIX. A student must exhaust informal and formal resolution methods before filing an EO/TIX complaint.

### 3. Comfort Animal Requirements

#### a. Vaccinations

Comfort Animals must have required vaccinations or licenses pursuant to local law and must wear a rabies vaccination tag.

b. Licensing

The Owner must abide by current city, county and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to the licensing, vaccination, and other requirements of animal ownership applicable to the Owner's species of Comfort Animal. It is the Owner's responsibility to know and understand all applicable ordinances, laws, and regulations in addition to university policies applicable to their Comfort Animal. The university has the right to request documentation of compliance with such ordinances, laws and/or regulations, which may include presentation of vaccination certificate(s), registration, or licensing documentation.

d. Types of Animals

Generally, dogs and cats are commonly requested as Comfort Animals, although other animals may serve in this capacity. For the health and safety of residents, the university is not required to grant non-domesticated or unique animals, such as snakes, reptiles, barnyard animals, monkeys, rats, spiders, or other insects, as reasonable accommodations.

e. Age

Comfort Animals must be at least six months of age.

f. Documentation

The university reserves the right to require updated veterinary records or other evidence of the health of the animal at any time.

g. Annual Verification

Completion and submission of forms with accompanying records to verify current vaccination status, good health, and existing approval (if any) of the Comfort Animal must be provided prior to each fall term of residence to the Department of Housing and Residence Life. No Comfort Animal will be permitted in university housing without annual submission of the above-described documents. If the animal is returned to campus without submission of the appropriate documentation to the Department of Housing and Residence Life, the university may request the Owner remove the animal from campus within 48 hours of notification. If the animal is not removed as requested, University Officials may consider the animal a trespasser and contact the appropriate City of Denton authorities to remove the animal from campus. Any costs associated with removal of the animal from UNT property are the responsibility of the animal's Owner.

h. Factors for Consideration for Comfort Animals

To ensure that the presence of a Comfort Animal does not pose undue hardship or fundamentally alter the living environment, and to make housing assignments for individuals approved to use Comfort Animals, the university will consider

appropriate factors, including the following:

- i. whether the size of the animal is appropriate to the available assigned housing space;
- ii. whether the animal's presence would force another student from individual housing (e.g., serious allergies);
- iii. whether the animal exhibits aggressiveness or makes excessive noise, such that its presence jeopardizes other individuals' rights to peace and quiet enjoyment of the residence hall;
- iv. whether the animal is housebroken and has required vaccinations or licenses pursuant to local law;
- v. whether the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others or potential transmission of zoonotic diseases exist that cannot be effectively mitigated;
- vi. whether the animal threatens to cause or historically has caused substantial damage to the property of others, including to the university;
- vii. whether use of the Comfort Animal would place an undue hardship or burden upon the university;
- viii. whether the presence of the Comfort Animal will fundamentally alter the living environment; and
- ix. whether the presence of the Comfort Animal would result in activities that are in violation of Housing community policies or procedures.

#### 4. Responsibilities of Comfort Animal Owner

The Owner of a Comfort Animal approved as an accommodation in a university residence hall must:

- a. Abide by all Department of Housing and Residence Life policies. The Owner is responsible for assuring that the Comfort Animal does not interfere with the operation of the residence hall, cause undue difficulties for other residents, or fundamentally alter the living environment.
- b. Assume full responsibility for cleaning up after a Comfort Animal, including disposal of all animal waste in accordance with guidelines established by the Department of Housing and Residence Life and not allow odor, noise, or other animal behavior to disturb other residence hall residents.
- c. Assume full financial responsibility for damage or injury caused by the Comfort Animal, including but not limited to replacement of furniture, carpet, windows, and wall covering. Expenses related to property damage will be charged at the time of

repair or move-out.

- d. Assume full financial responsibility for any expense incurred for cleaning above and beyond a standard cleaning, and for any costs related to pest control or pest mitigation.
- e. Assume full financial responsibility for the cost of care, arrangements, and well-being of the Comfort Animal.
- f. Provide for the supervision of the Comfort Animal when the Owner will be away for more than a reasonable time period, as determined by the appropriate university staff based on the totality of the circumstances. Comfort Animals may not be left in the care of another resident for extended time periods. Animals must leave campus during all university breaks if the student leaves campus.
- g. Notify the Office of Disability Access and Department of Housing and Residence Life if the Comfort Animal is no longer needed or is no longer occupying university housing with the resident.

#### 5. Exceptions and Interpretations

Exceptions and interpretations related to Section IV.B. of this policy can be made by the Vice President for Student Affairs or their designee.

### **C. Therapy Animals**

Therapy Animals:

- a. are only allowed on campus for clinical, outreach, and educational purposes;
- b. are only permitted in the UNT Counseling Center, UNT College of Education Consortium for Animal Assisted Therapy, or locations approved by UNT Risk Management Services (RMS);
- c. must always be accompanied by a qualified handler; the handler is solely responsible for maintaining control of the animal and ensuring it is not used around persons who have contraindication to the presence of animals (*e.g.*, allergies, fear of animals, religious beliefs); and
- d. if used on campus for educational purposes, must comply with [UNT Policy 13.001, Animal Care and Use](#).

### **D. Pets**

Pets are permitted on campus grounds if the animal is under the direct control of a responsible person and restrained by a leash that does not exceed 6 feet in length, or is in an appropriate animal carrier, crate, cage, or kennel. Pets are not allowed in campus buildings or any portion of buildings where campus business is being conducted, including residence halls, except as approved by the Department of Housing and Residence Life.

### **E. Animal Exhibits**

Live animal exhibits are permitted on campus for purposes as defined in this policy. A live animal exhibit must be sponsored by a university department, approved by the Vice President of the sponsoring unit, and approved by RMS. A written request to bring a live animal exhibit onto university property must be submitted to RMS at least ten (10) business days prior to the date of the exhibit.

### **F. Animal Removal**

The university may request an Owner remove Service Animals/Service Animals in Training, Comfort Animals, or pets from campus for reasons that include but are not limited to the following:

1. Failure to Properly Control the Animal

The Owner does not or cannot take effective action to control the animal. Improper animal behaviors that should be controlled include but are not limited to barking, growling, nipping, snapping, biting, lunging, or jumping at people or other animals. The Owner of an animal deemed to be out of control may be prohibited from bringing the Service Animal/Service Animal in Training onto university property. Comfort Animals meeting these criteria may be excluded from university residence halls until the Owner can demonstrate that they have taken significant steps to mitigate the behavior.

2. Non-Housebroken Animal

The animal is not housebroken (i.e., trained so that it controls its waste elimination).

3. Animal Care

It is determined by University Officials that the animal's Owner has failed to properly care for the animal. An Owner must ensure that the animal and its environment are maintained in a healthy, clean manner. Instances of suspected abuse of an animal will be referred to the Dean of Students, the Office of Human Resources, or other appropriate authority.

4. Direct Threat

The animal is determined to be a substantial and direct threat to the health and safety of individuals. A direct threat may be based upon the poor health or hygiene of the animal, the behavior of the animal, or the presence of an animal in a sensitive area, such as certain laboratories or mechanical or industrial areas.

5. Fundamental Alteration

The presence of an animal fundamentally alters a university program by requiring a significant alteration to the essential nature of the services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations offered.

6. Damage or Harm

The animal causes damage or harm to persons or property.

**G. Conflicting Accommodations**

In circumstances where the presence of a Service Animal/Service Animal in Training or Comfort Animal in university housing may substantially impair another individual’s physical or mental wellbeing, such as but not limited to allergies or phobias, the university will consider the needs of both persons in meeting its obligations to reasonably accommodate all disabilities and to resolve the problem as efficiently and expeditiously as possible. Conflicting disabilities involving students should be referred to the Office of Disability Access. Conflicts involving employees should be referred to the Office of Equal Opportunity.

**H. Appeals and Grievances**

Any individual who feels that they have been improperly denied the ability to bring or maintain an animal on university property may file an appeal with the university ADA Coordinator within the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX at [oeotix@unt.edu](mailto:oeotix@unt.edu), or (940) 565-2759, or refer to the [Office of Equal Opportunity website](#) for further information.

**V. Resources/Forms/Tools**

[Process for Requesting a Comfort Animal in Campus Housing](#)  
[UNT Housing Handbook](#)

**VI. References and Cross-References**

[City of Denton Animal Services](#)  
[UNT Policy 05.011 Employment of Individuals with Disabilities and Workplace Accommodations](#)  
[UNT Policy 13.001, Animal Care and Use](#)  
[UNT Policy 16.001 Disability Accommodations for Students and Academic Units](#)

**VII. Revision History**

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