

Guidelines to Support Students with Service Animals in Labs

Goal

The University of Mary Washington strives for an inclusive campus environment and welcomes the presence of trained service animals assisting individuals with disabilities on University property. The University intends all students to be safe and successful in the laboratories and welcomes students to share any personal information they feel is pertinent for their instructors to have in order to help them be successful.

All students with disabilities are encouraged to access the services available through the Office of Disability Resources (ODR); however, students who require a service animal are not required to contact ODR. This guidance is intended for instructional faculty teaching in laboratory areas and students who are service animal handlers utilizing these areas.

What is a service animal?

A service animal must be individually trained to perform a task, specifically related to the animal handler's disability. There is no certification or identification that is needed, although identification through the use of a service animal vest is recommended. Confusion may arise related to service animals, often with regard to whether the animal is an emotional support animal or therapy animal. A service animal is not an emotional support animal or therapy animal. A service animal can only be a dog or miniature horse. The [UMW Assistance Animals Policy J.1.2](#) is available for additional guidance.

Information for Instructional Faculty in High Hazard Areas:

Service animals are permitted to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of a facility where a person is allowed to go. If a student brings any animal, except a service dog or service miniature horse, the employee can prohibit the animal from being in the lab. For a service animal, there are two permitted questions that may be asked:

1. Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

Safety/Hazard Considerations

Faculty and staff must inform all students of potential hazards present in the high hazard spaces. Students requiring a service animal should take these factors into consideration when making decisions about their animal. Students who require the use of a service animal in labs assume responsibility for all risks involved in the use of their service animal in lab areas, including the risk of exposure to hazardous materials and objects to their service animal.

A service animal can be excluded or asked to leave the room if the behaviors are dangerous or a significant interference with activities that are unrelated to the job or task that the service animal is performing, or if the presence of the animal will fundamentally alter the nature of the learning outcome. If there is a belief that a fundamental alteration exists due to the presence of a service animal in lab, this decision must be made through the Office of Disability Resources. In accordance with [UMW Assistance Animal Policy J.1.2](#):

“Handlers must not allow animals to disrupt or interfere with University activities, including but not limited to teaching, research, service or administrative activities. If the animal is unruly or disruptive, or if handler fails to maintain control of the animal, the owner or handler must regain control immediately or remove the animal from the University property. Event sponsors or office and department personnel may seek the assistance of University Police. If the improper behavior continues or occurs after warning the handler may be prohibited from bringing the animal onto University property. These determinations will be made on a case by case basis by the department/program responsible for the area, University Police, and the Director of Emergency Management and Safety. In the event an animal is banned, the University will determine with the individual if other accommodations will effectively allow the individual to participate in the program, service or activity.”

The service animal handler must be permitted to return to activities without the service animal, should the service animal be dismissed. Instructional faculty are not required to provide make up labs or assignments if the student misses any portion of the lab, in the event that the dismissal of a service animal is necessary due to dangerous or disruptive behaviors unrelated to the job or task that the service animal is performing.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

When Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is required for students, PPE is also recommended for the safety of the service animal. Additional information on recommended PPE from the Office of Emergency Management and Safety (OEMS) is available below:

- <https://www.pawzdogboots.com/> - Paw Protectors
- www.maytexcorp.com/products_apparel.htm - Lab Coats
- Disposable pad where the service animal can sit/rest during class period.

In the Event of an Emergency:

In the event of a health or safety emergency, please contact university police (540-654-4444) and assist in providing information about the service animal, if needed.

Should the service animal handler be unable to care for their service animal due to emergency, every effort will be made to keep the service animal with their handler. Emergency contact information of an individual who may be on call to care for the animal in the event of an emergency may also be provided within the Needs

Assessment form by the service animal handler, should the handler be unable to care for the animal due to a medical emergency during the lab. Should the service animal not be permitted to travel with the student to receive emergency care and there is no emergency contact information provided, or no response from the emergency contact, the service animal will need to be reported to Animal Control authorities.

Considerations for Service Animal Handler Safety Planning in Lab:

- It is important to consider the specific work or task that the service animal provides during the lab, the possible exposure to hazardous chemicals and procedures, and the safety of other students in the laboratory.
- Potential hazards can include but are not limited to dripping, spilled, splashed chemicals; broken glass or chemicals on the floor; heavier-than-air vapors.
- Possible safe locations for a service animal can include but are not limited to: by the student's bench area; in a recessed area under a lab bench or under a table; against a wall/under a coat rack; in a portable kennel outside of the lab; an adjacent non-lab room.
- Acceptable alternatives, if any, of providing those services during the lab;
- How the service animal interacts with and/or alerts its animal handler;
- Emergency procedures needed for the service animal and animal handler;
- Protective equipment/clothing for the service animal that may be appropriate; and,
- What is necessary to minimize or prevent negative impact to others.

Service Animal in Lab Needs Assessment

Student Name: _____

Faculty/Staff Name: _____

If a student brings a service animal to the lab, the following questions should be asked:

1. Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?

2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

3. Additional information may be provided to the prompts below. Students have the option choose to provide additional information about their service animal, at their discretion. The student is also welcome to also speak with the Office of Disability Resources with any concerns or questions. Helpful information may include:

- a. Sharing how the service animal alerts (if applicable)

- b. Information for the faculty/staff that would be helpful to know if the service animal alerts (if applicable):

- c. In the event of a medical emergency, the following emergency contact information is provided for an individual on call to provide care to the service animal:

Service Animal Handler in Lab Expectations Agreement:

- Service animals must remain under the handler’s control at all times.
- Animals must not show aggression toward other animals or people in the laboratory.
- Service animal handlers are responsible for any damage or mess caused by the animal.
- Service animal handlers are responsible for understanding increased risk of utilizing a service animal in lab spaces and assume all responsibility, including the potential of harm to their service animal.
- Hazards and risks associated with the lab section have been reviewed by the lab instructor and the student.
- Service animal handlers are responsible for understanding how their service animal may impact space and work flow within the lab setting and work with their faculty to mitigate any risk involved with the presence of their service animal in the lab.
- If the service animal handler wishes to grant permission for anyone in the lab to interact with the service animal, doing so must not disrupt laboratory work or instruction.
- If the service animal behaves in a way that is disruptive (unrelated to the job or task that the service animal is performing) or dangerous, the handler will be asked to remove their service animal from the lab without the option for a make-up lab or assignment.

I understand my responsibilities as a service animal handler and agree to abide by these expectations.

Student Signature/Date:

Lab employee keeps original.

Student receives copy.