

***Administrative Procedures Manual***

Title: <b>Policy for Service Animals, Service Animals In-Training, Assistance Animals and Comfort Animals</b>	NO:  6.20
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**Office of Primary Responsibility: Student Affairs**

- A. Background. Thomas Nelson Community College (the College) is committed to complying with the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#) (ADA) as amended by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADA Amendments Act) and Section 504 or the [Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#) as amended. The College will also comply with the [Code of Virginia, § 51.5. Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) and all state laws pertaining to individuals with disabilities.
- B. Purpose. This document establishes the policies governing the presence of service animals, service animals in-training, assistance animals and comfort animals on Thomas Nelson campuses facilities, and applies to faculty, staff, students, and the public who utilize any college-owned or leased facility. This document is written in accordance with the [Code of Virginia, § 51.5.](#)
- C. Service Animals.
1. The College uses the Code of Virginia approved definition of a service animal as “any dog that is 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.”

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2. The College also recognizes as service animals in-training as those animals that are being trained by both students/faculty/staff with disabilities and experienced trainers who may or may not be disabled.
  3. In addition to the provisions about service dogs, revised ADA regulations have a new, separate provision about miniature horses that have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. (Miniature horses generally range in height from 24 inches to 34 inches measured to the shoulders and generally weigh between 70 and 100 pounds.) These service animals shall be permitted in Thomas Nelson's facilities where it is reasonable to do so and where they can be accommodated within those facilities.
  4. Service animals or service animals in-training are allowed in all public spaces including waiting areas, administrative offices, cafeterias, libraries, bookstores, walkways, streets, open outdoor spaces, theaters, etc., without seeking permission from any Thomas Nelson official. Employees, students and invitees may also bring service animals and service animals in-training into classrooms, laboratories, kitchens and non-sterile environments.
- D. Fraudulent Representation of a Service Animal. Under [Code of Virginia 51.5-44.1](#), any person who knowingly and willfully fits a dog with a harness, collar, vest, or sign, or uses an identification card commonly used by a person with a disability, in order to represent that the dog is a service dog or hearing dog to fraudulently gain public access for such dog pursuant to provisions in [51.5-44](#) is guilty of a Class 4 misdemeanor.
- E. Assistance Animals and Comfort Animals:
1. Assistance animals and comfort animals of any species, which may provide emotional support to a person but are not trained to perform work or tasks related to a person's disability, are not permitted inside Thomas Nelson's buildings and facilities except for purposes of an animal's participation in instructional programs or where permission is granted by a member of the Administration, Disability Support Coordinator, Disability Support Counselor, or Campus Police Officer. Under ADA, comfort animals are not considered service animals.
  2. Assistance animals and comfort animals that are leashed, tethered or being held under the control of a custodian are permitted in outdoor areas on and around the College's campuses and facilities. Custodians of assistance animals and comfort animals must abide by all rules required under the laws of Virginia and local ordinances. (See Section H, Animal Custodian's Responsibilities.)

F. Types of Service Animals:

1. Guide animal is a carefully trained animal that serves as a travel companion for persons with severe visual impairments or who are blind.
2. Hearing animal is an animal that has been trained to alert a person with significant hearing loss or who is deaf when a sound alarm occurs.
3. Support animal is an animal that has been trained to assist a person with a mobility or health impairment. The common tasks a support animal performs include carrying, opening doors, activating elevator buttons, helping a person up after a fall, etc.
4. Seizure Response animal is an animal that has been trained to assist a person when a seizure occurs. Services provided by this trained animal depend on the person's needs. Animals may stand guard during a seizure, may go for help, or even predict a seizure and warn the person before it occurs.
5. Signal Dog is one trained to assist a person with autism. The dog alerts the partner to distracting repetitive movements common among those with autism, allowing the person to stop the movement (e.g., hand flapping). A person with autism may have problems with sensory input and need the same support services from a dog that a dog might give to a person who is blind or deaf.
6. Emotional Response animal is an animal that has been trained to assist a person during a panic attack or onset of anxiety. Services provided by this trained animal may be to stand guard, go around corners to alert of possible danger ahead, to paw at the leg to either warn of an oncoming panic attack or avoid the onset by calming the person, or to lay across the lap or the body of a person in order to provide compression to relieve or avoid the onset of an anxiety or panic attack.

G. Faculty and Staff Responsibilities:

1. General rules:
  - a. Do not pet or feed service animals. They are working and must not be distracted.
  - b. Do not separate or attempt to separate the service animal from his/her partner.
  - c. Allow animals in all permissible places at Thomas Nelson pursuant to rules noted below.

2. When in doubt about whether an animal is either a service animal or service animal in-training, Thomas Nelson employees can only ask the following two questions of the person with custody of the animal:
  - a. Is the service animal or service animal in-training required because of your disability?
  - b. What job or task has the animal either been trained to perform or is being trained to perform?
3. Thomas Nelson faculty and staff cannot request medical documentation, ask about the person's disability, request an identification card, proof of training, or ask the person to make the animal perform the activity for which it either trained or is in the process of being trained to perform. If, after asking the two permissible questions, the employee still has concerns about the animal in question, he/she should contact the Disability Support Services Office.
4. Thomas Nelson faculty and staff should not consider allergies or fear from others as an excuse to deny access or provide a service to a person accompanied by a service animal. When a person who is allergic to animal dander and a custodian with a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room or different rooms in the facility.

H. Animal Custodian's Responsibilities:

1. Custodians are encouraged, but not required, to register their service animal or service animal in-training with Thomas Nelson Disability Support Services.
2. Service animals and service animals in-training must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the custodian must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
3. Custodians must make sure that all requirements for the presence of a service animal or service animals in-training are met. Current vaccinations (to include rabies, distemper and parvovirus) and identity tags must comply with Virginia requirements and county specific requirements. Dogs must wear a vaccination tag.

4. Custodians accompanied by service animals must follow local ordinances regarding animal feces. If a custodian with a disability cannot pick up the animal's feces, he/she must make arrangements for cleaning up after the animal.
5. All service animals and service animals in-training must be in good health and custodians are responsible for their animal's behavior. If the accompanying animal exhibits unacceptable behavior, including aggression when not being provoked, the custodian is expected to employ proper training techniques to correct such behavior.
6. Custodians will be responsible for any extensive damage to college facilities. This does not include normal wear and tear. Service animals may be asked to wear protective shoes to prevent slippage or damage to floors.

I. Reasons for Removing Service Animals from Thomas Nelson Campuses or Facilities:

1. The animal is out of control and the custodian does not take effective action to control it. This may include, but is not limited to, a service animal presenting disruptive behavior such as barking or running around. Custodians may be asked to remove the animal from the classroom or premises until the owner takes measures to correct such behaviors.
2. The animal is not housebroken.
3. The dog poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others. This may include, but is not exclusive to, showing unprovoked aggression or serious illness.

J. Complaints:

1. Any student who is not satisfied with the decision made concerning a purported service animal, service animal in-training, assistance animal, or comfort animal may file a written complaint using Thomas Nelson's Student Grievance Procedure found in the [Student Handbook](#).
2. Any employee with a disability who is not satisfied with a decision made concerning a purported service animal, service animal in-training, or comfort animal may file a complaint under the College's employee grievance or dispute resolution procedures, found on the Thomas Nelson [Human Resources](#) webpage.

- K. Inquiries. Any questions or concerns can be addressed to the Disability Support Services Office Coordinator or designee in Room 201, Griffin Hall, telephone 757-825-2833 or on the Thomas Nelson website (<http://tncc.edu/services/disabilities/staff>).
- L. Voluntary Registration of Service Animal. Individuals using a service animal or service animal in-training may voluntarily register that animal with the Office of Disability Support Services. A sample registration form is attached.

**Attachment**

**REGISTRATION FORM FOR SERVICE ANIMAL**



The Peninsula's Community College

**REGISTRATION FORM FOR SERVICE ANIMAL**

*Note: This information is being submitted on a voluntary basis only.*

User Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Animal: \_\_\_\_\_

Service Animal or Service Animal In-training? \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Animal (breed, color, any other relevant identification):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is the service animal required because of a disability? \_\_\_\_\_

What work or task has the service animal been trained to perform?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please attach proof that the animal is up-to-date on all required vaccinations. Such proof is required on an annual basis.

I understand that I am responsible for my service animal and will abide by Thomas Nelson Community College's policies for service animals and service animals in-training.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_