
Animal Policy

Policy Statement

This policy addresses Bergen Community College's (Bergen, the College) position regarding privately-owned service, emotional support, therapy animals, and pets, in College buildings and on College owned and controlled property.

Animals Permitted in College Buildings/Facilities

Individuals are prohibited from bringing any animal not listed below into any College building, any athletic or recreational field, or in any College vehicle at any time. If found, the animal and its handler will be asked to leave the building, field, or vehicle.

The following animals are permitted in College buildings/facilities under this policy, with specific limitations.

- Service Animals
- Service Animals in training
- Animals used in the delivery of academic instruction, during the period of instruction and in the period reasonably necessary to prepare for and conclude the instructional period.
- Animals brought to animal-related College-sponsored events, during the duration of the event.
- Working Animals used in support of law enforcement or disaster recovery activities or used for geese control purposes.

Animals Permitted on College Grounds

Animals (Service Animals, Emotional Support Animals, Therapy Animals, and/or Pets) are permitted outdoors on College grounds unless an area is specifically signed as prohibited. Animals must always be under the control and supervision of their owners/handlers. No individual may tether an animal to any fence, tree, shrubs, post, or other object located on College property nor leave it unattended in a vehicle. Service Animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered unless it interferes with the animal's work or the owner's disability. All other animals must always be on a leash (no longer than six (6) feet in length). Prompt collection and disposal of animal waste is required.

Responsibility for Animal Conduct

Any individual who brings an animal on College property as permitted by this policy is responsible for the behavior and actions of the animal; the health and safety of individuals in proximity of or impacted by the

animal; and the health and cleanliness of the campus environment. Any animal on College property must have all current vaccinations and be licensed as required by the municipality where the animal is primarily housed. To ensure compliance, the College may require veterinary certification verifying that the animal is properly vaccinated and free of contagious diseases, as well as official documentation proving that all municipal licensing is current.

Any individual, owning or having under their control any animal, may only bring such animal upon College property with a leash or lead suitably attached to the animal and held by the individual responsible. An exception is made for any Service Animal who cannot do their work when leashed. An animal that is supposed to be under a person's control may be removed from campus if the animal: (i) harms another person; (ii) is out of control and the owner does not take effective action to control it; or (iii) is not housebroken.

The College will seek restitution for any animal-related damage to College-controlled property, facilities, or grounds. The cleanup, repair, or replacement cost of damaged property is the sole responsibility of the owner of the animal that caused the damage.

If any animal is or appears to be unaccompanied or a stray, Public Safety will contact local animal control. Depending on the circumstance, if an animal is left unattended in a car, the College may intervene by involving campus security, local law enforcement, and/or local animal control. Students or employees who do so may also be disciplined or sanctioned by the College for being in violation of this policy.

Service Animals

Service animals are allowed to accompany their owner/handler to any part of the grounds, buildings, and athletic facilities, where other members of the College, public, or visitors are allowed, except under rare circumstances where the animal's health or safety may be compromised. Service animals are not required to wear any special type of harness or garment and must always be under the handler's control. For disabled individuals that are accompanied by service animals, the College encourages voluntary registration of the service animal with the Office of Specialized Services.

In situations where the need for a service animal by an individual is not obvious, the College can ask the following two questions: (1) Is the Service Animal required because of a disability? and (2) What work or task has the animal been trained to perform? If the individual refuses to answer, the College may allow the individual and their service animal on campus regardless, as they have the right to access the premises with their service animal, even if the need is not obvious or the individual refuses to answer.

New Jersey state law (N.J.S.A 10:5-29.5) prohibits the misrepresentation of an animal as a service animal. It is a violation to intentionally fit a dog with a harness or collar typically used by guide/service dogs to falsely represent it as such and is also illegal to knowingly and willfully misrepresent a pet as a service animal.

Emotional Support Animals

Emotional Support Animals are not allowed in College buildings/facilities nor are they allowed on athletic playing surfaces (e.g., fields, courts) or on the sidelines of such playing surfaces. Emotional Support Animals allowed on campus grounds are limited to dogs and cats.

Therapy Animals

All policies are subject to amendment. Please refer to the College Policy website (<https://bergen.edu/about-us/college-policies/>) for the official, most recent version.

Therapy Animals are not allowed in College buildings/facilities nor are they allowed on athletic playing surfaces (e.g., fields, courts) or on the sidelines of such playing surfaces. Therapy Animals allowed on campus grounds are limited to dogs and cats. Therapy Animals that are being hosted on campus as part of a College-sponsored program/event are allowed.

Pet

Pets are not allowed in College buildings/facilities nor are they allowed on athletic playing surfaces (e.g., fields, courts) or on the sidelines of such playing surfaces. Pets allowed on campus grounds are limited to dogs and cats.

Reason for Policy

Service Animals serve a vital role for individuals with apparent and non-apparent disabilities. It is important that individuals who rely on these animals, as well as the greater College community, understand their rights and responsibilities under the law.

This policy sets expectations and outlines responsibilities for animal owners/handlers to ensure the proper supervision and maintenance of their animal including unsanitary conditions or health concerns, disruption of daily operations, or damage to grounds, buildings, or property.

Who Should Read This Policy

Students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Definitions

Pet

A privately owned domestic-bred or tamed animal such as a dog or cat kept/owned by an individual primarily for its companionship, friendship, and pleasure rather than for a specific working purpose.

Service Animal

An animal (dog or in certain situations miniature horse) that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These tasks may include but are not limited to guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals who are hearing impaired to intruders or sound, pulling a wheelchair, carrying and/or retrieving dropped items, etc. Other species of animals, whether trained or untrained, are not considered Service Animals by the ADA.

Emotional Support Animal (ESA)

An Emotional Support Animal, sometimes referred to as an assistance animal or support animal, is an animal that provides companionship, relieves loneliness, and sometimes helps with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but does not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. The role these animals play is more formally defined as therapeutic and supporting their owners' mental and emotional health.

Therapy Animal

An animal, ordinarily a dog (but can be cats), that typically has completed a rigorous certification process which includes passing behavioral exams and completing supervised training. The primary purpose of a

therapy animal is to provide comfort and affection to individuals in group settings like hospitals, nursing homes, and schools.

Working Animal

An animal that is trained to perform practical tasks for human benefit, as opposed to pet or companion animals. These animals perform jobs, such as police work or search and rescue. Service animals are considered working animals, but not all working animals are service animals.

Procedure Reference

Applicable state and/or federal acts, laws, and regulations:

Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

A federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability and provides that state and local governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations that serve the public must allow service animals to accompany disabled individuals in all areas of the facility where the public is allowed to go, as a reasonable accommodation.

Rehabilitation Act of 1973

A federal law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and provides services for them. Colleges and universities which receive federal financial assistance must adhere to the protections of Section 504 which ensure that qualifying individuals which meet the definition of a person with a disability have access to their educational programs and activities equal to those with no disabilities. Section 504 requires that reasonable accommodation(s) be provided to individuals with disabilities which includes allowing service animals in all campus areas accessible to others.

New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (NJLAD)

New Jersey state law that mirrors the protection of the ADA and prohibits employers from discriminating against disabled individuals. Under the NJLAD, a service animal is considered a reasonable accommodation for an individual with a disability.

Related Documents/Policies:

Policy History: (adopted/amended)

Adopted: June 16, 2026

Amended:

Reviewed:

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