Calvin College Support Animal Protocol

I. Purpose

Calvin College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Michigan Persons with Disabilities Civil Rights Act (MPDCRA). This policy governs the use of support animals on campus by persons with documented disabilities.

II. Protocol Statement

Persons with disabilities may have a support animal within the housing of Calvin College consistent with the provisions of this protocol.

III. Definitions

The definition of a disability under ADA is:

A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.

The definition of a support animal is:

A support animal is an animal that provides emotional or other support that ameliorates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person’s disability. Unlike service animal’s, support animals are not required to be trained to perform work or tasks, and they include species other than dogs and miniature horses.

This protocol does not apply to animals for the provision of service. See “Calvin College Service Animal Protocol.”

IV. Procedures for Requesting use of a Comfort Animal as a Reasonable Accommodation

A student wishing to use a support animal in Calvin Housing must identify and register with the office of Services to Students with Disabilities located in Academic Services (616-526-6113) in advance (preferably at least 30 days) to moving the support animal on campus. The animal is necessary to afford the person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy college housing.

In addition, the following documentation may be required:

1. Documentation of disability.
2. A signed letter, on professional letterhead, from the individual’s health care provider stating:
   - The diagnosis and nature of the disability and it’s functional limitations
   - The provider’s professional opinion regarding an identifiable relationship between the disability and the support that will be performed by the animal. Including which symptoms will be ameliorated as a result of the support animal.
The college reserves the right to request additional clarification or documentation and will review individual requests on a case by case basis.

The office of Services to Students with Disabilities will validate the need for the approved accommodations and collaborate with the resident and the Dean of Housing and Residence Life to facilitate a supportive network.

**Note:** Students with support animals requesting on campus housing are not automatically assigned to a private room. (Students with support animals will be matched with potential roommates to prevent possible incompatibilities such as allergies, fears, or other concerns).

**V. Requirements for Support Animals**

The individual using the support animal must maintain control of the animal at all times and is responsible for the cost, care, cleanliness, vaccination and supervision of the animal. They are financially responsible for property damage caused by his or her support animal.

Support animals may not be fed using food from the dining hall.

The individual using the support animal is responsible for ensuring the immediate cleanup and proper disposal of animal waste. Calvin's Physical Plant and Housing staff may designate animal toileting areas.

**VI. Restricted Areas**

Support animals are generally not allowed to accompany persons with disabilities in all public areas of Calvin College as a service animal is allowed to do, but a support animal may reside in campus housing, including accompanying such individual in all public or common use areas of campus housing, when it may be necessary to afford the person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy campus housing.

**VII. Removal of a Support Animal**

A support animal must be kept under control by the person with a disability. A support animal may be removed from the campus if the support animal:

- is disruptive or out of control and an effective action to control it is not taken.
- deposits waste in a designated cage or litter box and the owner fails to clean such cage or box, such that the cleanliness of the room is not maintained.
- poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be mitigated by reasonable modifications of policies, practices or procedures or the provision of auxiliary aids or services.
- poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others.

In considering whether a support animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, Calvin College will make an individualized assessment, based on reasonable judgment, current medical knowledge, or the best available objective evidence to determine:
1) the nature, duration and severity of the risk
2) the probability that the potential injury will actually occur
3) whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, procedures or the provision of auxiliary aids or services will mitigate the risk.

A support animal can be denied if the animal:
- poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others
- poses an undue financial and administrative burden, or
- would fundamentally alter the nature of the provider’s operations (e.g., disrupts roommates, neighbors).

VIII. Dispute Resolution Procedure

Disagreements about a disability determination, appropriateness of an accommodation, service quality, or a restriction should be raised first with the Disability Coordinator involved. Individuals may also file a complaint with the College’s ADA Compliance Officer, who is the Vice President of Administration and Finance. In the event of perceived discrimination or harassment on the basis of having a disability, please reference the Safer Spaces Policy found at: http://www.calvin.edu/about/safer-spaces/.