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	SUBJECT Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists Service and Emotional Support Animal Policy		ORIGINATOR: Board of Directors
	Submitted Date:	Approved by the Board of Directors on:	

Purpose:

This policy governs the presence of Service and Emotional Support Animals on the Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalist (CVUU) campus.

Definitions:

Disability - A disability 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.

Owner - An owner is the individual utilizing the assistance of a Service Animal or emotional support animal on CVUU’s campus.

Service Animal – As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. The tasks performed by the dog must be directly related to the person’s disability.

Emotional Support Animal (ESA) – An animal (typically a dog or cat) that provides a therapeutic benefit to its owner through companionship and is not specifically trained or certified to take specific action when needed to assist a person whose disability is a diagnosed emotional, psychiatric or mental health-related condition. An ESA does not qualify as a service animal.

Policy:

SERVICE ANIMALS

While the ADA specifically exempts religious institutions from its coverage, CVUU, as part of its commitment to being a welcoming community, generally follows the ADA’s standards in regard to the presence of service animals on the CVUU campus. However, CVUU reserves the right to require accommodations by an owner to ensure that the presence of a service animal on the CVUU campus does not have a negative health, safety, or mental health impact on others using the campus.

As noted in the Definitions section above, service animals are dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include: guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person’s disability. Dogs whose function is to provide comfort or emotional support, and are not trained to perform a specific job or task for a person with a disability as described above, do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.”

A service animal often is identified by their uniform, though such identification is not required by the ADA. When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, CVUU staff or leaders may ask two questions of the owner or handler: 1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the dog been

trained to perform. Documentation of a service dog's training will not be required. Questions regarding the nature of the owner's disability will not be asked.

Generally, service dogs will be allowed in the Sanctuary, classrooms, meeting rooms and other parts of the CVUU campus with their owner. However, if CVUU staff or leaders become aware that the presence of a particular service animal may pose a risk of harm to the health, safety, or mental health of a person present on the CVUU campus, such staff or leaders may require accommodations (such as limiting where the dog may go on the campus) to enable the affected person to also fully participate in the life of the CVUU community. In addition, if the animal's behavior – such as barking, growling or acting aggressively toward others – is seen by CVUU staff or leaders as being disruptive or potentially dangerous, such staff or leaders may require that the animal be removed from the campus or from a particular part of the campus.

Service animals and their owners or handlers are required to comply with the following standards (which are consistent with the ADA), as a condition of entering and remaining on the CVUU campus:

- Service animals remain with their owners or handlers while on campus.
- Service animals do not sit on the furniture.
- Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's ability to perform the task(s) for which the animal was trained or the owner's disability prevents the use of these devices. In that case, the owner or handler must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
- Service animals do not whine, bark, grumble, growl or make other noises. An exception may be if the whining is an alert, such as to notify a handler who is experiencing a panic attack or a drop in blood sugar.
- Service animals do not obstruct an area used for emergency evacuation.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL (ESA)

CVUU defines emotional support animal (ESA) as an animal (typically a dog or cat) that provides a therapeutic benefit to its owner through companionship and is not specifically trained or certified to take specific action when needed to assist a person whose disability is a diagnosed emotional, psychiatric or mental health-related condition. While the ADA does not provide any right of access to public accommodations for Emotional Support Animals, CVUU, as a welcoming community, recognizes that, for some individuals, the calming and supportive presence of an ESA may help them to manage the stress of public settings, including services and activities on the CVUU campus. Given this, CVUU, at its discretion, may give a case-by-case consideration of an individual's request to have an ESA present with that individual on the CVUU campus.

If you are the owner of an ESA (or the caregiver of an owner) and the ESA alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a mental health-related disability, you may call or e-mail the Administrative Assistant to request an in-person appointment with the Minister or a person designated by the minister to discuss approval for an ESA. Approval is strictly on a case-by-case basis.

ESA owners should bring to that appointment current documentation from a licensed mental health professional or physician treating their mental health-related disability that provides the following:

- *a statement that the person has a mental health-related disability and the animal accompanying the attendee is necessary to the person's mental health or treatment,*
- *the number and type(s) of animal(s) that are serving the person as an ESA,*

- *evidence that the individual providing the assessment of the person is a licensed mental health professional or physician (including, in the case of a mental health professional, the assessing professional's license number [or type, issue date, and state in which the license was issued]), and*
- *a statement that the person is under the assessing professional's care,*

Unless a minister or a person designated by the minister grants approval, an ESA normally is not permitted access to the campus for Sunday services or other classes, events and programs. Therefore, requests for appointments should be made well in advance of a plan to attend. Persons with ESAs who are granted reasonable accommodation by a minister will receive a special tag at that time, and must display this tag on the ESA in order for staff, ushers, and other community members to readily identify their ESA as approved. The minister, at his or her discretion, may give certain CVUU staff or leaders the authority to allow the presence on the CVUU campus of an individual who comes with an ESA without having obtained prior approval from the minister.

ESAs must comply with all of the standards set out above for service animals. Should an animal not comply with those standards, the owner/handler may be required to remove their animal from the campus, or to take such other remedial action as CVUU staff or leaders may direct.