

# Undergraduate Student Handbook

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## Student Disability Services

Saint Mary's College of California

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### **Student Disability Services**

Saint Mary's College of California Student Disability Services is a committed partner to students with disabilities, working to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations in an effort to create an equal opportunity for all students to participate in and enjoy SMC educational and campus life programs. All student accommodation requests, including but not limited to registration, housing, and classroom accommodations can be made by contacting Student Disability Services (SDS). Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact SDS at (925) 631-4358 or at [sds@stmarys-ca.edu](mailto:sds@stmarys-ca.edu) to set up a confidential introductory appointment to discuss accommodation guidelines and available services. More information about Student Disability Services can be found at <https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/academics/academic-resources-support/student-disability-services>

### **Accessibility**

Saint Mary's College strives to provide an accessible environment to all students, staff, faculty and visitors to our campus. Electronic accessibility is also a priority. Individuals who encounter physical access barriers on campus or electronic information and website barriers can call SDS at (925) 631-4358 for information, assistance and to report any URL's or page titles that are creating barriers.

### **Requesting Accommodations**

In order to start the accommodation request process, students will set up a meeting with a Student Disability Services Coordinator to discuss their disability and how it affects them. SDS will ask about barriers and limitations and what accommodations student has used in the past. Students who would like to proceed with requesting accommodations will be asked to fill out an online ADA application form and asked to provide appropriate documentation to verify their disability from a diagnosing professional. Once the Coordinator has all of the information they need to assess the individual student's disability and the limitations they experience, the Coordinator will meet with the student to have an interactive discussion about what accommodations might be reasonable to put into place.

When the student and Coordinator agree on accommodations, either during or after the Registration meeting, the student's accommodations will be approved and an Eligibility Letter will

be sent to the student. Faculty will be notified of accommodations once the student requests the accommodation through the SDS portal.

## **Service Animal and Assistance (Emotional Support) Animal Policy**

### ***General***

Saint Mary's College of California ("SMC") recognizes the importance of Service and Assistance Animals. The term "Assistance Animal" is distinct from the term "Service Animal" and the two are not treated the same under the law or this policy. Additionally, the term "Emotional Support Animal," used throughout this Policy and at SMC, is used synonymously with the term "Assistance Animal." This Policy may be amended by SMC from time to time. The most current and applicable version of this Policy may always be obtained on the Office of Student Disability Services ("SDS") website at <https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/academics/academic-resources-support/student-disability-services>.

### ***Definitions/Terminology***

Assistive Animal: An Emotional Support Animal.

Service Animal: Means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including but not limited to, performing services such as minimal protection work, rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items. This definition includes services for individuals whose disability may include but is not limited to physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual or other mental disability. A Service Animal has the capacity to recognize a situation and respond to it. The term "Service Animal" in this Policy is intended to be used in a manner consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended and consistent with California law.

Emotional Support Animal: In the context of housing accommodations, this term means an animal that is used by a person having a disability to alleviate a symptom of the disability. In the context of employment accommodations, this term means an animal that is used by a person having a disability or medical condition to alleviate a symptom of the disability or medical condition. Under applicable state and federal law, various terms may be used in a manner equivalent or substantially similar to Emotional Support Animal. Other terms used under applicable law, which may include but are not limited to "support animal," "comfort animal," or "therapy animal," shall be interpreted to mean Emotional Support Animal under this Policy. Emotional Support Animals need not have any particular service training as the mere presence of the animal positively affects the disability. In addition, although Emotional Support Animals are often dogs, this Policy is not limited to dogs and may include other animals.

### ***Statement of Policy***

SMC is committed to accommodating individuals with disabilities. Consistent with its legal obligations, SMC will accommodate students and other individuals with disabilities by permitting the use of Service Animals on campus and in all areas of campus (with limited exception) to facilitate their full-participation and equal access to the College's programs and activities. SMC is also committed to accommodating individuals with a medical need or disability to maintain Emotional Support Animals in the individual's campus work space if an employee of the College. Finally, SMC is committed to accommodating individuals with a disability to maintain Emotional Support Animals in residential facilities. Accommodations for Service Animals are addressed differently than accommodation requests for Emotional Support Animals as the legal requirements are different.

The Office of Student Disability Services (“SDS”) collaborates with individuals, faculty, and staff to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to all SMC programs and activities. All requests for accommodations need to be made through the Student Disability Services office or, in the context of workplace accommodations, the Human Resources office. Requests for accommodations will be evaluated consistent with applicable legal requirements.

Approved accommodations involving Emotional Support Animals will be limited on campus to the individual’s residence room or, if an employee of SMC, the individual’s workspace .

All animals, inclusive of Service and Emotional Support Animals, may be prohibited from the campus, including but not limited to office spaces and residential facilities, if 1) the animal is out of control and effective remedial action is not taken to maintain control, 2) the animal is not housebroken, or 3) the animal poses a direct threat of harm or substantial property damage.

Requests to bring an emotional support animal into Campus Housing must be made directly to Student Disability Services and should be made 30 days prior to move in. Contact SDS at (925) 631-4358 to initiate the request and receive the appropriate forms for student and their diagnosing professional to complete and return for evaluation of the request.

### ***Relationship to SMC’s Pet Policy***

SMC has a campus-wide Pet Policy that, with limited exception, prohibits pets on campus. Service Animals are not considered “pets” and therefore the general prohibition of pets does not apply to these animals. Notwithstanding the terms of the Pet Policy, under certain circumstances and by express written agreement, pets may be allowed on campus. Individuals who maintain approved pets are expected to comply with a uniform set of rules related to the maintenance of their animal on campus. To the extent not inconsistent with an individual’s accommodation or inconsistent with state and federal law concerning the accommodation of individuals with Service Animals, the uniform rules for animals maintained on campus shall be followed by all members of the campus community who have authorized animals on campus. Exceptions to abiding by individual rules in the uniform rules by individuals with Service Animals may be made by the 504 Coordinator where compliance with the particular rule is contrary to applicable law (e.g., SMC may not charge an individual with a Service Animal a deposit or other pet or animal fee, but it may charge an individual for the cost of cleaning or fixing damage to campus property). If the individual is an employee and seeking an exception to a rule as it may apply to a workplace accommodation, such exceptions must be reviewed by Human Resources as a part of the interactive accommodation process.

### **Grievances**

The College and Student Disability Services support students in their right to file a grievance when a student believes they have been denied equal access in the form of appropriate accommodations, modifications, auxiliary aids or effective communication or suffered discriminatory harassment as described in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The general grievance procedures, which apply to all students, are available to students with disabilities. Grievances specific to accommodations and the Student Disability Services office should be referred to the Director of Student Disability Services for review and adjudication.