

<b>Policy Name:</b> III.43 Animals in the Workplace Policy	<b>Section:</b> III Human Resources	<b>Programs:</b> All
	<b>Standard/Area:</b> F 4 Workforce Development and Management	<b>Review Date:</b>
<b>File:</b> III.43 Animals in the Workplace Policy	<b>Effective Date:</b> 8/26/25	<b>Revised:</b>

## Section I: Intent

The purpose of this policy is to present guidelines for the presence of animals in the workplace at Martha's Vineyard Community Services (MVCS) to ensure a safe, inclusive, and productive environment for all employees and clients.

## Section II: Policy

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and visitors of MVCS, and is applicable in all MVCS properties. MVCS recognizes the positive impact that animals can have on well-being and mental health. However, to maintain a professional and safe environment, the following guidelines must be adhered to regarding the presence of animals in the workplace.

### Definitions

**Service Animal:**

A dog that has been individually trained to perform tasks for a person with a disability.

**Emotional Support Animal (ESA):**

An animal that provides comfort and support to an individual without specific training to perform tasks.

**Therapy Animal:**

An animal that is trained to provide comfort and affection in therapeutic settings.

## Section III: Procedures

### 1. Service Animals

Service animals as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are permitted in the workplace.

Employees using service animals must inform their supervisor and Human Resources that they have a service animal. An employee may voluntarily present animal's certification and other supporting documentation supporting service animal status.

MVCS may ask the employee the following questions:

- (1) Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
- (2) What work or assistance has the animal been trained to perform?

## 2. Employee Pets:

If an employee wishes to bring a pet into the workplace, a written document (registration) must be submitted to HR which includes the following information:

- Is the pet up to date with vaccinations?
  - Is the pet licensed in the town in which they reside per state law?
  - Is the pet housebroken?
  - Has the pet had any training? If yes, what
  - No reported bites – if yes - when – circumstance?
- HR will review the submitted registration document and provide a decision in coordination with the impacted Division Director

## 3. Emotional Support and Therapy Animals:

Emotional support and therapy animals utilized by staff are not permitted in the workplace without specific arrangements having been made and approved by Human Resources.

All employees using service animals and emotional support animals must provide MVCS with information as to the animal's training, license, certifications (if any), and vaccinations. Emotional support animals must also have a veterinary professional complete a temperament evaluation for the animal as well as a general health evaluation. The Emotional Support Animal Evaluation Form (which includes Health Evaluation and Temperament Evaluation) is attached here and may be filled out by the animal's veterinary provider or trainer. In the alternative, a veterinary provider's own form, letter, or documentation that supplies the information requested on the ESA Animal Evaluation Form may be substituted for the form.

Requests for ESA or therapy animal presence must be submitted in writing with the above documentation and reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

## 4. Animal Behavior:

The owner-employee must be always in full control of the animal. This generally means that the animal is on a leash, harness or other type of restraint, unless the owner is unable to retain an animal on leash due to a disability.

Appropriate behavior is expected from the animal while on MVCS property. Disruptive, dangerous, or aggressive animals will not be permitted on MVCS property.

The care and supervision of the animal is solely the responsibility of the owner-employee.

#### 5. Health and Safety:

Animals must be properly vaccinated and free from parasites. The organization reserves the right to request proof of vaccination at any time for animals frequently in the workplace.

Handlers are responsible for cleaning up after their animals and ensuring that they do not pose a health risk to others.

Cleanliness is mandatory. It is the employee's responsibility to clean and dispose of all animal waste.

An animal will not be permitted as an accommodation if it would pose a threat to health or safety, or if the accommodation would pose an undue hardship on the organization.

Employees owning service animals or emotional support animals are fully responsible for any liability, injury, or damage caused by the animal, including damage to property or individuals.

*Violation of requirements may result in the alteration or temporary or permanent rescission of an approved accommodation.*

#### 6. Allergies and Phobias:

Employees with allergies or phobias related to animals should notify Human Resources. This reporting individual may not be identified to agency staff at the individual's request. Reasonable accommodations will be considered to ensure a comfortable work environment.

HR will consider all accommodation requests and may seek to limit animal presence in the workplace because of employee need for accommodation.

#### 7. Sickness

Animals with known communicable sickness (communicable to either humans or other animals) may not be brought to work. If an animal appears to be sick and is present in the workplace, the Division Director or senior staff present may make the determination that the animal needs to be removed by its handler.

#### 8. Designated Areas:

Specific areas may be designated for animals, particularly service animals, to minimize disruptions. These areas will be communicated to all staff. Except as allowable by law, no employee pet will be allowed to be in areas of organizational programming.

9. Training and Awareness:

Staff are encouraged to participate in training sessions regarding the role of service animals and the importance of inclusive practices.

10. Superseding Regulation or Requirements

Regulations or requirements prohibiting animals in the workplace may exist with licensing bodies, public health, or through local ordinance. In the case of such prohibitions, the impacted program will comply with those requirements which may supersede this policy. If an individual program has a more restrictive access policy for animals, that policy will supersede this policy.

Compliance:

All employees and visitors must comply with this policy. Violations may result in disciplinary action or removal from the premises.

Responsibilities

Supervisors/Division Directors: Ensure adherence to this policy and address any concerns from staff regarding animals in the workplace.

Human Resources: Manage requests for emotional support and therapy animals, manage accommodation requests, manage request for pet presence within the workplace, maintain records, and provide guidance on compliance with applicable laws.

Employees: Responsible for the conduct of their animals and ensuring a safe and respectful workplace.

Clinician and/or Orienting Staff: Responsible for orienting client/visitor to this policy

## Section IV: Distribution and Training

This Policy and associated attachments are distributed on the MVCS shared Drive (P) and also on the Employee Portal. Notifications related to new, amended, or reviewed policies will be communicated to MVCS leadership and program directors for dissemination to their staff as appropriate. The policy may be directly disseminated to appropriate staff and/or staff groups via email notification after initial dissemination to leadership as per direction of the CEO or designee. The dissemination will be performed by the Chief Operations Officer or designee.

## Section V: Legal, Regulatory, Accrediting, and Other Related References and Resources

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)