

MECC 2017-18 Student Handbook Addendum

SCHEV Authority for Out-of-State Distance Education Students

Addition to Student Complaint Policy 12-1-17

In accordance with the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), the complaint procedures outlined above are subject to oversight of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) in complaints arising from students living outside Virginia who are enrolled in online course(s) through MECC. Before filing a complaint with SCHEV, students must follow the full complaint process at MECC. Then, if the complaint has not been resolved internally, the student may submit the Student Complaint form to SCHEV for further review. More details on the formal SCHEV student complaint procedure may be found at

<http://www.schev.edu/index/students-and-parents/resources/student-complaints/student-complaint-form>. Grade appeals and student conduct appeals are not allowed under SARA.

Discrimination Complaints

Students who feel discriminated against based on race, color, religion, gender, or disability may also seek resolution through the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the United States Department of Education. If the college complaint procedure was utilized by the student, the OCR complaint must be filed within 60 calendar days from the date of MECC's final decision. If the college's complaint process was not followed, students have up to 180 calendar days from the time of the alleged discrimination to file with OCR. More information on how to file a complaint with the OCR may be found at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>.

Web Privacy, Security & Content Disclaimer

Approved January 2018

Web Privacy Statement

It is the policy of the Commonwealth of Virginia that agencies of the Commonwealth will collect and retain personal information about citizens only to the extent necessary to provide the service or benefit desired; collect only appropriate information; provide the reason the information is collected so that citizens shall understand that reason clearly and enable citizens to examine their personal record which is maintained by a public body.

The Mountain Empire Community College Web site:

1. May collect one or more of the following pieces of personal information: your email address, name, social security number, date of birth, phone number, or course assignments. Any of this information is collected to meet your specific online requests. If you choose not to provide this personal information,

you will be unable to receive some of the services this Web site offers.

2. Collects your IP address, pages browsed, and date and time of your visit. This information is used for internal College statistical purposes only.
3. Uses only temporary cookies (i.e., files which may contain a variety of information) on some Web pages for screen colors and graphics or to track movement on the site but will not place them permanently on your hard drive. When you exit the Web site, the file is automatically removed.
4. May link to other Web sites that may or may not collect data that does not have a relationship to the College through using cookies. You should check for a policy on the linked to Web page.
5. Safeguards any information gathered in compliance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and does not supply any gathered information to other individuals or organizations, except in compliance with those laws.

Security Statement

Mountain Empire Community College ensures the integrity of our systems and that the data we store is protected. The college has gone beyond industry standards to protect our systems by using firewalls, IDS/ISP devices, NAC protection, requiring authentication (systems, networks and data), requiring encryption of all sensitive data and applying all physical security possible. We perform monitoring of all systems and networks; network modeling and shaping, employ the latest Anti-virus / Anti-Spam protection, and performing audits of all systems and networks. We instill the concept of security and data protection in everything we do including our day to day business practices; new systems, network and building designs; and as a overall part of the colleges desire to keep our environment and data safe and private.

Content Disclaimer

Mountain Empire Community College provides its website, catalog, handbooks, and any other printed materials or electronic media for your general guidance. The college does not guarantee that the information contained within them, including, but not limited to, the contents of any page that resides under the DNS registrations of www.mecc.edu is up-to-date, complete and accurate, and individuals assume any risks associated with relying upon such information without checking other credible sources, such as a student's academic advisor. In addition, a student's or prospective student's reliance upon information contained within these sources, or individual program catalogs or handbooks, when making academic decisions does not constitute, and should not be construed as, a contract with the college. Further, the college reserves the right to make changes to any provision or requirement within these sources, as well as changes to any curriculum or program, whether during a student's enrollment or otherwise.

Links or references to other materials and websites provided in the above-referenced sources are also for information purposes only and do not constitute the college's endorsement of products or services referenced.

Policy for Service Animals, Service Animals In-Training, and Comfort Animals

Approved January 2018

- A. Background. Mountain Empire Community College is committed to complying with the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#) (ADA) as amended by the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 (ADA Amendments Act) and Section 504 or the [Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#) as amended. Mountain Empire Community College will also comply with the *Code of Virginia, § 51.5. Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (<http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title51.5/chapter9>) and all state laws pertaining to individuals with disabilities.
- B. Purpose. This document establishes the policies governing the presence of service animals, service animals in-training, and comfort animals on College campuses facilities, and applies to faculty, staff, students, and the public who utilize any college-owned or leased facility. This document is written in accordance with ADA guidelines pertaining to the use of such animals (https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm) and *Code of Virginia, § 51.5*
- C. Service Animals.
1. Mountain Empire Community College uses the ADA-approved definition of a service animal as “any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.”
 2. Mountain Empire Community College also recognizes service animals in-training as those animals that are being trained by both students/faculty/staff with disabilities and experienced trainers who may or may not be disabled, provided that all of the following Virginia law conditions are met (Va. Code Section 51.51-44).
 - The dog is at least six months of age;
 - The dog is either (i) in harness and in training as a guide dog for the blind or visually impaired, (ii) on a blaze orange leash and in training as a hearing dog, or (iii) in a harness, backpack, or vest identifying the dog as a trained service dog, and in all such cases accompanied by a person who is experienced trainer of such service dogs or is conducting continuing training of a guide/hearing/service dog and is wearing a jacket identifying the recognized service dog organization.

3. In addition to the provisions about service dogs, revised ADA regulations have a new, separate provision about miniature horses that have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. (Miniature horses generally range in height from 24 inches to 34 inches measured to the shoulders and generally weigh between 70 and 100 pounds.) These service animals shall be permitted in Mountain Empire Community College's facilities where it is reasonable to do so and where they can be accommodated within those facilities.
 4. Service animals or service animals in-training are allowed in all public spaces including waiting areas, administrative offices, cafeterias, libraries, bookstores, walkways, streets, open outdoor spaces, theaters, etc., without seeking permission from any College official. Employees, students and invitees may also bring service animals and service animals in-training into classrooms, laboratories, kitchens and non-sterile environments.
- D. Fraudulent Representation of a Service Animal. Under [Code of Virginia 51.5-44.1](#), any person who knowingly and willfully fits a dog with a harness, collar, vest, or sign, or uses an identification card commonly used by a person with a disability, in order to represent that the dog is a service dog or hearing dog to fraudulently gain public access for such dog pursuant to provisions in [51.5-44](#) is guilty of a Class 4 misdemeanor.
- E. Comfort Animals:
1. Under ADA, comfort animals are not service animals. Comfort animals of any species, which may provide emotional support to a person but are not trained to perform work or tasks related to a person's disability, are not permitted inside College buildings and facilities.
- F. Types of Service Animals:
1. Guide animal is a carefully trained animal that serves as a travel companion for persons with severe visual impairments or who are blind.
 2. Hearing animal is an animal that has been trained to alert a person with significant hearing loss or who is deaf when a sound alarm occurs.
 3. Support animal is an animal that has been trained to assist a person with a mobility or health impairment. The common tasks a support animal performs include carrying, opening doors, activating elevator buttons, helping a person up after a fall, etc.

4. Seizure Response animal is an animal that has been trained to assist a person when a seizure occurs. Services provided by this trained animal depend on the person's needs. Animals may stand guard during a seizure, may go for help, or even predict a seizure and warn the person before it occurs.
5. Signal Dog is one trained to assist a person with autism. The dog alerts the partner to distracting repetitive movements common among those with autism, allowing the person to stop the movement (e.g., hand flapping). A person with autism may have problems with sensory input and need the same support services from a dog that a dog might give to a person who is blind or deaf.
6. Emotional Response animal is an animal that has been trained to assist a person during a panic attack or onset of anxiety. Services provided by this trained animal may be to stand guard, go around corners to alert of possible danger ahead, to paw at the leg to either warn of an oncoming panic attack or avoid the onset by calming the person, or to lay across the lap or the body of a person in order to provide compression to relieve or avoid the onset of an anxiety or panic attack.

G. Faculty and Staff Responsibilities:

1. General rules:
 - Do not pet or feed service animals. They are working and must not be distracted. Service animals are working animals, not pets.
 - Do not separate or attempt to separate the service animal from his/her partner.
 - Allow service animals in all permissible places at Mountain Empire Community College pursuant to rules noted below.
2. When in doubt about whether an animal is either a service animal or service animal in-training, College employees can only ask the following two questions of the person with custody of the animal:
 - a. Is the service animal or service animal in-training required because of your disability?
 - b. What job or task has the animal either been trained to perform or is being trained to perform?
3. With respect to service animals, College faculty and staff cannot request medical documentation, ask about the person's disability, request an identification card, proof of training, or ask the person to make the animal perform the activity for which it either trained or is in the process of being trained to perform. If, after

asking the two permissible questions, the employee still has concerns about the animal in question, he/she should contact the Office of Disability Services.

4. College faculty and staff may not consider allergies or fear from others as a reason to deny access or provide a service to a person accompanied by a service animal. When a person who is allergic to animal dander and a custodian with a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room or different rooms in the facility.

H. Student Responsibilities

1. Suggested student guidelines

- Speak to the custodian first. The service animal and the custodian are a service team. Remember the service animal is working, and the custodian's life could depend on the service animal staying focused on the job.
- Treat the custodian with respect and sensitivity. Assume the service team can handle themselves. Do not ask personal questions about the custodian's disability or the service animal.
- Do not pet the service animal without asking the custodian first.
- Do not assume a sleeping service animal is off duty.
- Do not deliberately startle a service animal.
- Do not feed a service animal. Food is the ultimate distraction for a working service animal.
- Do not separate or attempt to separate a custodian from his or her service animal.
- Never agree to be a temporary caretaker for a custodian's service animal.

I. Animal Custodian's Responsibilities:

- Custodians are encouraged, but not required, to register their service animal or service animal in-training with Mountain Empire Community College's Office of Disability Services
- Service animals and service animals in-training will be the full responsibility of its custodian and shall be under the control of its custodian at all times, and must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the custodian must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
- Custodians must make sure that all requirements for the presence of a service animal or service animals in-training are met. Current vaccinations (to include rabies, distemper and parvovirus) and identity tags must comply with Virginia requirements and county specific requirements. Dogs must wear a vaccination tag.

- Custodians accompanied by service animals must follow local ordinances regarding animal feces. If a custodian with a disability cannot pick up the animal's feces, he/she must make arrangements for cleaning up after the animal.
- All service animals and service animals in-training must be in good health and custodians are responsible for their animal's behavior. If the accompanying animal exhibits unacceptable behavior, including but not limited to aggression when not being provoked, the custodian is expected to employ proper training techniques to correct such behavior.
- A service animal custodian is responsible for ensuring that the animal is kept clean and the service animal is regularly bathed, groomed and treated for ticks and fleas.
- Custodians will be responsible for any extensive damage to College facilities. This does not include normal wear and tear. Service animals may be asked to wear protective shoes to prevent slippage or damage to floors.

J. Reasons for Removing Service Animals from College Campuses or Facilities:

- The animal is out of control and the custodian does not take effective action to control it. This may include but is not limited to, a service animal presenting disruptive behavior such as barking, walking or running around without the custodian, growling, etc. Custodians will be asked to remove the animal from the classroom or premises until the owner takes measures to correct such behaviors.
- The animal's custodian is mistreating or neglecting the animal.
- The animal is not housebroken.
- The dog poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others. This may include, but is not exclusive to, showing unprovoked aggression, or serious illness.

K. Complaints:

1. Any student who is not satisfied with the decision made concerning a purported service animal, service animal in-training, or comfort animal may file a written complaint using Mountain Empire Community College's Student Grievance Procedure found in the Student Handbook.
2. Any employee with a disability who is not satisfied with a decision made concerning a purported service animal, service animal in-training, or comfort animal may file a complaint under Mountain Empire Community College's employee grievance or dispute resolution procedures, found on Mountain Empire Community College's Human Resources webpage.

L. Inquiries:

For general inquiries about this policy, contact the Office of Disability Services (Dale Lee, Student Leadership and Disability Counselor).

M. Voluntary Registration of Service Animal. Individuals using a service animal or service animal in-training may voluntarily register that animal with the Office of Disability Support Services.

MOUNTAIN EMPIRE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Office of Disability Services

SERVICE ANIMAL REGISTRATION FORM

(Voluntary use only)

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Mailing Address:

Type of Animal:

Service Animal or Service Animal-in-Training:

Description (breed, color, weight):

What work or task has the animal been trained to perform:

Attach documentation of vaccinations.