Comfort Animal Guidelines

*Comfort animals may also be referred to as assistance or support animals

**Registration:** Contact the Disability Access office and complete the registration and approval process. This process includes providing professional documentation of a disability and functional limitations that require use of a comfort animal.

**Owner ID:** The animal must wear an identification tag and an owner identification tag (owner name and contact information) any time the animal is on campus.

**Responsibility:** The care and supervision of the animal is solely the responsibility of its handler. The handler is responsible for the comfort animal at all times. The handler of a comfort animal shall be liable for any and all costs resulting when a comfort animal causes damage to any DSC facility or injury to any person. In the case of any incident involving injury to a person by a comfort animal, the handler shall make an immediate report to the DSC Public Safety Department so that the incident can be properly investigated and documented. An exception to this standard would be in case of an emergency involving the handler. If an emergency occurs all efforts should be made to keep the comfort animal with its handler. In a case where this is not possible, a pre-designated alternate handler, a member of public safety, or Disability Access office staff may take control of the animal until which time it can be reunited with its handler.

**Leash:** The animal must be leashed and under close and direct physical control of the handler at all times the animal is on campus facilities. Handlers are also prohibited from transferring such control to another person (except a designated alternate) even momentarily, requesting the assistance of other persons in supervising or controlling their comfort animal or otherwise leaving the presence of their comfort animal for any period of time while on DSC facilities. Any handler seeking an exception from the requirements must request an appropriate exception as provided in this policy.

**Behavior:** Handler is required to immediately remove a comfort animal that is unruly or disruptive (biting or attempting to bite, barking, running around, jumping at or on people or other excessive physical activity) or may be directed to do so by a faculty or staff member or by any member of the DSC Public Safety Department. Any comfort animal may be removed from campus temporarily or excluded from campus permanently if the animal is unruly and disruptive, in ill health, or habitually unclean. The decision to exclude a comfort animal from campus will be made by the Public Safety Director or officer if the animal is deemed an immediate threat to the health and safety of others, or jointly by the Public Safety Director and Disability Access office personnel after hearing information from all parties involved if the situation is not an emergency.
Housebroken: Handler must ensure that their comfort animal is housebroken or appropriately cage or litter box trained. Any comfort animal that is not will be excluded from DSC facilities. In the event of an isolated incident, the handler is responsible for immediately cleaning up and disposing of bodily fluids or solid wastes whether indoors or outdoors.

Cleanup: The handler is responsible for cleaning up all liquid and solid animal waste. The handler should have appropriate cleanup materials and disposal bags available at all times. Used cleanup materials should be disposed of by tying securely in a plastic bag and depositing in an outdoor waste container. When necessary, the handler must immediately contact Plant Operations so that further cleanup, disinfecting and deodorizing can be performed. All costs for additional cleanup or repairs will be the responsibility of the handler.

Health: A handler with a comfort animal that appears to be ill may be asked to remove the comfort animal from the facilities by faculty or staff or DSC Public Safety. Comfort animals must be clean and well groomed. Any handler with a comfort animal that is not clean (flea-infested, foul smelling, or inadequately groomed) may be asked to leave any DSC facility until such condition is corrected. See Federal Regulations and Resources sections for more details regarding safety and health of others.

Reporting of incidents: In the event of any incident involving property damage or bodily injury by the comfort animal, the handler is required to submit a written report to DSC Public Safety and the Disability Access office within 24 hours detailing the events of the incident and identifying any other persons involved in the incident or witnessing the incident.

Documentation required for animal: The owner/handler must provide the documentation of the following:

- **Vaccination:** The animal must have current immunization against diseases, including rabies, distemper and parvovirus. Dogs must wear a rabies vaccination tag.

- **Health:** The animal must be in good health. Animals to reside in Dalton State’s Residential Life must provide an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian.

Areas Off Limits to Comfort Animals:
Dalton State College may prohibit or restrict the access of comfort animals in certain facilities due to health and/or safety restrictions or where their presence would compromise the integrity of certain research or otherwise fundamentally alter a program or activity. Such prohibition/restriction will be determined on an individual basis by the administrator responsible for the restricted area and will be communicated in writing to the Disability Access office. Such restrictions may include but are not limited to:
• Research Laboratories where the presence of the animal may negatively impact the outcome of the research or the chemicals may be harmful to the animal.

• Mechanical Rooms/Custodial Closets such as boiler rooms, electrical closets, elevator control rooms, technology control rooms, and similar spaces.

• Areas where protective clothing/gear is required.

• Food preparation areas.

• Areas of Danger to the animal - where there are sharp objects on the floor or protruding from surfaces, hot surfaces, high levels of dust, moving machinery, or potentially dangerous chemicals.

• Other areas where the animal may be endangered or constitute a danger to persons.

The Disability Access office will coordinate with units that restrict access of comfort animals to a specific facility to provide appropriate notice to all members of the community and the public at large that those facilities are comfort animal restricted areas.

Federal Regulations and Resources: