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Request for Support Animal in University Housing

Overview of the Process for Requesting a Support Animal in University Housing

The University of Pittsburgh provides reasonable accommodations for a student with a disability who has a verifiable need of having a Support Animal, including an Emotional Support Animal, in University housing. A reasonable accommodation is an exception to the University's rules, policies, practices, or services that a student with a disability may need to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy University housing.

This form is to request a Support Animal, and NOT a Service Animal. What is the difference?

- Service Animals are defined as dogs, and in some instances miniature horses, that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. These tasks can include things like pulling a wheelchair, guiding a person who is visually impaired, or alerting a person who is having a seizure. The tasks a service dog can perform are not limited to this list. However, the work or task a service dog does must be directly related to the person's disability. Service Animals may accompany persons with disabilities into places that the public normally goes. Students with questions about Service Animals should contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services using the appropriate campus contact information below.
- A Support Animal is an assistance animal, other than a service animal, that does work, performs tasks, provides assistance, and/or provides therapeutic emotional support for individuals with disabilities.ⁱ An Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is a type of Support Animal. An ESA provides emotional support and comfort to individuals with psychiatric disabilities and other mental impairments. A Support Animal, including an ESA, is typically a dog, cat, small bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, other rodent, fish, turtle, or other small, domesticated animal.ⁱⁱ A Support Animal need not be trained to perform tasks for a person with a disability.ⁱⁱⁱ

To request a Support Animal in University Housing, a health care provider (such as a physician, optometrist, psychiatrist, psychologist, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, nurse, or clinical licensed social worker^{iv}) or a third party who has personal knowledge of the student's disability (as described by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)^v and is determined by DRS in good faith to be reliable may complete this form. Some websites sell certificates, registrations, and licensing documents for Support Animals to anyone who answers certain questions or participates in a short interview and pays a fee. Such documentation from the internet is not, by itself, sufficient to reliably establish that an individual has a non-observable disability or disability-related need for a Support Animal. By contrast, the University will consider as reliable documentation from a health care professional that confirms a person's disability and/or need for a Support Animal when the provider has personal knowledge of the individual.

The information completed on this form will be reviewed to determine:

1. That the student is a person with a documented disability;^{vi}
2. That the Support Animal being requested is necessary to afford the student, as a person with a disability, an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the on-campus housing facilities; and
3. That there is an identifiable relationship between the disability and the support that the Support Animal provides.

This form is offered as a guide and DRS will review all forms of documentation submitted. To the extent this information has already been submitted to DRS in another format, the University will not require re-submission.

The University will use good faith efforts to notify the student of its final determination in writing within 2 weeks of its receipt of documentation from the health care provider or third party with personal knowledge of the student’s disability (as described by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development)^{vii} who DRS has determined in good faith to be reliable. If the University determines that a student is not eligible for a Support Animal, or the specific Support Animal requested, the University will provide the student written notification of the denial and the reasons for the denial. The University will provide written notification of the grievance procedures that the student may use to challenge a denial.

A student who is approved to have a Support Animal in University housing will be required to acknowledge and comply with the Support Animal Owner’s Rights and Responsibilities, as outlined below. These rights and responsibilities will be reviewed with the student by DRS.

For more information about having an animal on campus, see *University of Pittsburgh Office of Disability Resources and Services Guidelines Regarding Animals on University Property*.

Submission Information

This form should be completed and submitted to the appropriate office, based on a student’s campus of attendance. Information about campus specific submissions can be found in the chart below:

University of Pittsburgh – Main Campus	Disability Resources and Services 412-648-7890 drsrecep@pitt.edu
Pitt Bradford	Disability Resources and Services 814-362-7609 clh71@pitt.edu
Pitt Greensburg	Disability Resources 724-836-7098 los3@pitt.edu
Pitt Johnstown	Office of Health & Counseling Services 814-269-7119 OHCS@pitt.edu

Student Information – to be completed by the student

Student Name

University ID

Campus

Email

Home Address

Local Address

Home Phone

Local Phone

Type of animal being requested (for example, dog, cat, rabbit)

I have read this document, and understand the conditions outlined.

Student Signature

Date

Student Healthcare Section – to be completed by healthcare provider or third party with personal knowledge of student’s disability

To properly evaluate how the University of Pittsburgh can best meet the student’s need for **requesting a Support Animal or Emotional Support Animal (ESA) in University housing**, the University requires information from a health care provider or reliable third party who has personal knowledge of the student’s disability (as described by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development),^{viii} including the use of a Support Animal to address limitations that result from such disability.

Specifically, the information provided on this form will be reviewed to determine whether:

1. The student is a person with a documented disability;
2. The Support Animal being requested is necessary to afford the student, as a person with a disability, an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the on-campus housing facilities; and
3. There is an identifiable relationship between the disability and the support that the Support Animal provides.

Please respond to all questions below and attach additional related information as appropriate.

1. Does the student have a disability, a.k.a. a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities? *Examples of major life activities include impairments to seeing, hearing, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, caring for one’s self, learning, speaking, working, and other impairments that may substantially limit at least one major life activity or bodily function.*^{ix}

NO

YES. Describe which major life activities or bodily functions are impaired:

2. Does the student need the Support Animal or Emotional Support Animal because the animal does work, performs tasks, provides assistance, and/or provides therapeutic emotional support related to the student’s disability?^x

NO

YES. Describe how the Support Animal or Emotional Support Animal does work, performs tasks, provides assistance, or provides therapeutic emotional support that reduces the symptoms and/or effects of the student’s disability:^{xi}

Provider/Third Party Information – to be completed by health care provider or reliable third party with personal knowledge of the student’s disability

I verify that the named student information is correct, and that I have personal knowledge of this student (i.e. knowledge used to diagnose, advise, counsel, treat or provide health care or other disability-related services to a patient/client).

Provider Name

Provider Qualifications (License Number, Certification, Degree, if applicable)

Address

Phone

Email

Signature

Date

SUPPORT ANIMAL HANDLER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A student who is approved for a Support Animal will be required to meet with DRS staff to review and agree to the following requirements. Failure to follow these requirements may result in the University requesting the removal of the Support Animal from University housing.

A Support Animal must be contained within the privately assigned student living accommodation (room, suite, or apartment), except to the extent the student is taking the animal out for natural relief. When a Support Animal is outside of the student's private living accommodation, the animal must be either controlled by a leash or harness or contained in an animal carrier. A Support Animal is not permitted in other non-public areas of the University without prior approval through the reasonable accommodation process administered through Disability Resources and Services.

Student's Responsibilities as the Animal Owner:

- The student is responsible for the behavior of the animal at all times while on University property.
- The student will provide DRS with a photograph of the animal.
- Where the animal is of a type that can wear a collar, such animal shall wear a collar with basic identification information at all times.
- The student must abide by current city, county, and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to licensing, vaccination, and other requirements for animals. The student must know and understand these ordinances, laws, and regulations. The University has the right to require reasonable documentation of compliance with such ordinances, laws, and/or regulations, which may include a vaccination certificate or a veterinarian's statement regarding the animal's health. The University reserves the right to make reasonable requests for documentation showing that the animal meets these requirements.
- The student is required to immediately clean up after and properly dispose of the animal's feces in a safe and sanitary manner. If the animal is a dog, the dog must be housebroken and kennel trained.
- In the case of an emergency, the University is not responsible for evacuating the animal. The student is responsible for providing DRS with an emergency contact for the animal that does not reside in University housing.
- The student's living accommodation must be kept reasonably clean and free of animals odors.
- The student is financially responsible for any and all costs associated with the care, maintenance and removal of the animal. This includes any costs of damage to University property caused by the animal, including but not limited to cleaning and repairs beyond reasonable wear and tear, and pest control. The University shall have the right to bill the student's account for unmet obligations under this provision.
- The student is responsible for maintaining control of the animal at all times. If an animal causes a threat to the health or safety of others, the student shall immediately take steps to maintain or control the animal (e.g., keeping the animal in a secure enclosure)^{xii}. In the event the student cannot control the animal's behavior, the student shall remove the animal from the area.

- The student agrees to abide by all equally-applicable policies that are unrelated to the student's disability such as assuring that the animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the residence or cause unreasonable difficulties for other students residing in University housing. If an animal's behavior creates a significant disturbance to University operations (for example, through excessive barking or other similar behavior), the student shall immediately take steps to maintain or control the animal. In the event the student cannot control the animal's behavior, the student shall remove the animal from the area.
- The Support Animal is permitted in University housing only as long as it is necessary due to the student's disability. The student must notify the University, in writing, if the animal is no longer needed or is no longer in residence. To replace an animal, the student must submit a new request to demonstrate that the new animal is necessary due to the student's disability.
- A material violation of the responsibilities described above may result in a written warning. If the student receives more than one written warning in an academic calendar year, the student may be required to re-engage in the interactive process with DRS to discuss the violations and whether an alternative accommodation may be effective in meeting the individual's disability-related needs. Repeated material violations or severe violations may result in one or more of the following: removal of the animal from campus; banning of the animal from all or part of campus; and disciplinary action against the student in accordance with other applicable University policies.
- Students found to be falsely characterizing their animal as a Service Animal or Support Animal may be subject to discipline in accordance with other applicable University policies.
- University employees with responsibility for maintaining or controlling a specific area of campus may ask a handler whether the animal is a pet, Support Animal, or Service Animal, unless the need for the Service Animal is readily apparent, and the student must respond to same.

Student's Rights as the Animal Owner:

- The University may not ask for or require a student with a disability to pay a surcharge or comply with other requirements generally not applicable to students without animals.^{xiii}
- A student with a disability may submit a request for a Support Animal in University housing at any time. The University must consider this request, even if the school year is already in session and/or the student has already brought the animal into University housing.^{xiv}
- The student is not required to equip a Service Animal or Support Animal with a vest or other item identifying it as such.
- While the interactive process is necessarily an open exchange of information, the University may not require the student to disclose details about their diagnosis, the severity of their disability, or medical records. The University may not require a medical examination.^{xv}
- The University may not insist on specific types of evidence if the information provided to the University meets the requirements of the University's policy with respect to Support Animals, as set forth in the Guideline's regarding Animals on University Property.^{xvi}
- In the event the University determines that the information provided to the University is insufficient to confirm a student's disability or disability-related need for a Support Animal, the University will provide the student with an opportunity to continue the "interactive

process,” including by discussing the reasons for the denial, by discussing alternative accommodations, and/or by allowing the student to supplement the information provided.^{xvii}

- The University will not deny a reasonable request for a Support Animal because the request would impose a fundamental alteration to the nature of the University’s operations or impose an undue financial and administrative burden on the University, without first engaging in an interactive process with the student to discuss whether an alternative accommodation may be effective in meeting the student’s disability-related needs.^{xviii}
- In the event the University determines that a student is not eligible or is no longer eligible for a Support Animal, or the specific Support Animal requested, the University will provide the student written notification of the reasons for this denial. The University will provide written notification of the grievance procedures that the student may use to challenge this denial.

ⁱ “Assessing a Person’s Request to Have an Animal as a Reasonable Accommodation Under the Fair Housing Act,” U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, at 11 (Jan. 28, 2020), available at <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PA/documents/HUDAsstAnimalNC1-28-2020.pdf> [hereinafter “HUD Guidance”]; see *Fair Hous. of the Dakotas, Inc. v. Goldmark Prop. Mgmt.*, 778 F. Supp. 2d 1028 (D.N.D. 2011) (determining that, in housing, a broader variety of assistance animals may be necessary as a reasonable accommodation, regardless of specific training).

ⁱⁱ HUD Guidance, 12; see 24 C.F.R. § 100.204(a).

ⁱⁱⁱ HUD Guidance, 1.

^{iv} HUD Guidance, 10, 12.

^v Per guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, personal knowledge in this context includes “the knowledge used to diagnose, advise, counsel, treat, or provide health care or other disability-related services to their patient/client.” HUD Guidance, 16.

^{vi} The Fair Housing Act defines a person with a disability to include (1) individuals with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; (2) individuals who are regarded as having such an impairment; and (3) individuals with a record of such an impairment.

^{vii} Per guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, personal knowledge in this context includes “the knowledge used to diagnose, advise, counsel, treat, or provide health care or other disability-related services to their patient/client.” HUD Guidance, 16.

^{viii} Per guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, personal knowledge in this context includes “the knowledge used to diagnose, advise, counsel, treat, or provide health care or other disability-related services to their patient/client.” HUD Guidance, 16.

^{ix} See 24 C.F.R. § 100.201.

^x HUD Guidance, 11, 17.

^{xi} *Id.*

^{xii} HUD Guidance, 13; see “Joint Statement of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice: Reasonable Accommodations Under the Fair Housing Act, at 4 (May 17, 2004), available at <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/huddojstatement.pdf> [hereinafter “Joint Statement”].

^{xiii} HUD Guidance, 14; See Joint Statement, 11; *Fair Hous. of the Dakotas, Inc. v. Goldmark Prop. Mgmt.*, 778 F. Supp. 2d 1028 (D.N.D. 2011).

^{xiv} See 24 C.F.R. § 100.204(a); HUD Guidance, 8.

^{xv} HUD Guidance, 14.

^{xvi} *Id.*

^{xvii} *Id.*; See Joint Statement.

^{xviii} HUD Guidance, 15.