

Assistance Animal Reasonable Accommodation Policy

Housing Provider is committed to granting reasonable accommodations to its rules, policies, practices, or services when such accommodations may be necessary to afford people with disabilities the equal opportunity to use and enjoy their dwellings or common areas. A reasonable accommodation is a change or exception to a rule or policy that is needed because of a person's disability. For example, a housing provider that has a policy of not allowing pets must make an exception to this policy in order to grant an Assistance Animal to an individual who is blind and requires a Seeing Eye dog.

One common type of reasonable accommodation is allowing a person with a disability to keep an assistance animal. An assistance animal is an animal that works, provides assistance, performs tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, or provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. Housing Provider recognizes the importance of Assistance Animals, and is committed assisting those that require such Assistance Animals.

Housing Provider will not deny a request to keep an Assistance Animal solely because the animal has not received formal training. Some Assistance Animals, known as service animals, are trained by professionals, their owners, or someone else to work or perform tasks for individuals with disabilities. Other Assistance Animals, however, do not require any special training. The relevant question is whether the animal performs the assistance or provides the benefit needed by the person with a disability, as required by the Fair Housing Act and its rules.

If an individual requests an Assistance Animal, Housing Provider will not ask about the nature or extent of the person's disability. Many times, it is readily apparent that an animal is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, such as a dog guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling a person's wheelchair, or providing assistance with stability to an individual with a mobility disability. If this is the case, then Housing Provider will not make any inquiries at all and the reasonable accommodation will be granted. However, Housing Provider may require information as to the identification of the animal.

If it is not readily apparent that an animal is trained to aid an individual with a disability, then Housing Provider will request and verify certain information to determine if the tenant qualifies for the requested reasonable accommodation before granting the reasonable accommodation. Housing Provider may ask if the animal is required because of a disability and what work or task the animal has been trained to perform. If the tenant meets the definition of being disabled, Housing Provider will not require documentation that an animal is trained or certified or licensed as a service animal.

If the animal is not trained to perform tasks for individuals with disabilities, then Housing Provider will require a statement from a health or social service professional, such as a doctor, physician's assistant, psychologist, or social worker, that the individual meets the definition of being disabled or handicapped as stated in the Fair Housing Act and that the designated animal provides assistance (including emotional support) that alleviates one or more symptoms or effects of the person's disability. Housing Provider will not ask for information about a person's disability or information about the symptoms or effects of the disability that will be alleviated by the Assistance Animal. In no case will a person requesting to keep an Assistance Animal as a reasonable accommodation be charged any fee, deposit, or other charge for making the request or for keeping the animal. Housing Provider will take steps necessary to make the process of obtaining the reasonable accommodation for the Assistance Animal simple and not burdensome on the tenant.

If an individual requires assistance in completing any form, Housing Provider will assist that individual in filling out the form or will fill out a form based on an oral request. If a health or social service professional provides substantially the same information in another format, it must be accepted, and Housing Provider will use the information provided in another format for processing the request. Housing Provider's provides forms to record reasonable accommodation requests, to obtain only the information that is necessary for a reasonable accommodation decision, and not to obtain confidential information that is not needed to make a reasonable accommodation decision.

Verification of request does not require completion of a release for medical information. However, some health care providers or medical professionals will not discuss a patient without a written release. It is Housing Provider's policy to explain to the health care provider or medical professional that it is merely verifying the information that has already been provided. If Housing Provider is unable to verify because the health care provider or medical professional requires a written release, the Resident will be informed of the problem to allow them to obtain the assistance from the health care provider or medical professional.

Housing Provider shall attempt to provide a quick decision to any Assistance Animal request. A decision shall be given no later than ten (10) days from obtaining the required information from the tenant and verification from the health care provider or medical professional. Prior to denying a request, the Housing Provider will attempt to engage in an interactive process with the requester in which the parties discuss possible alternative accommodations that might effectively meet the individual's disability-related needs. If the request is denied, an explanation for the denial will be provided in the written notification.