

## Service and Comfort Animal Policy

The Department of Housing and Residential Education (Housing) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill recognizes the importance of Service and Comfort Animals to individuals with documented disabilities and has established the following policy regarding Service (and Service Animals in training) and Comfort Animals, to assist residents with disabilities. This policy ensures that residents with disabilities, who require the use of Service or Comfort Animals as a reasonable accommodation, receive the benefit of the work or tasks performed by such animals or the therapeutic support they provide. Housing is committed to supporting residents with disabilities and their use of such an Animal in on-campus housing to facilitate their full-participation and equal access to the University's programs and activities. Set forth below are specific requirements and guidelines concerning the appropriate use of and protocols associated with Service and Comfort Animals. Housing reserves the right to amend this policy as circumstances require.

### Section I. Definitions

#### *A. Service Animal<sup>1</sup>*

A "Service Animal" is a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a documented disability. In some cases, a miniature horse may be permitted as a Service Animal. Other animals, whether wild or domestic, do not qualify as Service Animals. Examples of such work or tasks provided by a Service Animal include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service Animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a Service Animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as Service Animals.

#### *B. Comfort Animal*

A "Comfort Animal" is an animal that provides emotional support which alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a resident's documented disability. Some, but not all, animals that assist residents with disabilities are professionally trained. Other Assistance Animals are trained by the owners. In some cases, no special training is required for a Comfort Animal. The important consideration for Housing is whether or not the Comfort Animal provides the benefit needed as a reasonable accommodation to the resident with the disability. Unlike a Service Animal, a Comfort Animal does not assist a resident with a disability with activities of daily living, nor does it accompany a person with a disability at all times. Comfort Animals may be considered for access to university housing, however, they are not permitted in other areas of the university (e.g. libraries, academic buildings, classrooms, labs, student center, etc.).

#### *C. Pet*

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<sup>1</sup> Service Animals in training: Individuals qualified to train animals to aid and guide persons with disabilities are afforded the same rights to those individuals who require the assistance of a Service Animal. If you are training an animal to aid and guide persons with disabilities, you must contact Accessibility Resources and Service and comply with the requirements set forth in this policy.

A “Pet” is an animal kept for ordinary use and companionship. A pet is not considered a Service or Comfort Animal. Pets are not covered by this policy. Residents are not permitted to keep pets, other than fish, on university property or in university housing.

#### *D. Approved Animal*

An “Approved Animal” is a Service or Comfort Animal that has been granted as a reasonable accommodation under this policy.

#### *E. Owner*

The “Owner” is the student resident or other resident who has requested the accommodation and has received approval to bring the “approved animal” into on-campus housing.

### **Section II. Application Process**

#### *A. Requests for Service and Comfort Animals should be made by:*

1. Submitting documentation of a disability to Accessibility Resources and Service
2. Making an accommodation request by filling out the Special Accommodations Request Form available with your housing application.
3. In order to be considered for approval there must be a link between the animal and a documented disability. Emotional distress resulting from having to give up an animal because a “no pets” policy does not qualify a person for an accommodation under federal law.

### **Section III. Responsibilities and Guidelines**

#### *A. Responsibilities*

1. The Owner is responsible for assuring that the Approved Animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the residence hall community or cause difficulties for students who reside there.
2. The Owner is financially responsible for the actions of the Approved Animal including bodily injury or property damage. The owner’s responsibility covers, but is not limited to, replacement of furniture, carpet, window, wall covering, and the like. The owner is expected to cover these costs at the time of repair and/or move-out.
3. The Owner is responsible for any expenses incurred for cleaning above and beyond a standard cleaning or for repairs to University premises that are assessed after the student and animal vacate the residence. The University shall have the right to bill the Student account of the owner for unmet obligations.
4. The Owner must notify Accessibility Resources and Service and the Department of Housing and Residential Education in writing if the Approved Animal is no longer needed as an Approved Animal or is no longer in residence. To replace an Approved Animal the owner must file a new request.
5. Care and supervision of the animal are the responsibility of the individual who benefits from the Approved Animal's use. The owner is required to maintain control of the animal at all times.
6. The Owner is also responsible for ensuring the cleanup of the animal's waste and, when appropriate, must toilet the animal in areas designated by the University consistent with the reasonable capacity of the Owner. Indoor animal waste, such as cat litter, must be placed in a sturdy plastic bag and securely tied up before being disposed of in outside trash dumpsters. Litter boxes should be placed on mats so that waste is not tracked onto carpeted surfaces.

*B. Guidelines*

1. The Owner's residence may be inspected for fleas, ticks or other pests as needed. Housing Support will schedule the inspection. If fleas, ticks or other pests are detected through inspection, the residence will be treated using approved fumigation methods by a university approved pest control service. The owner will be billed for the expense of any pest treatment above and beyond standard pest management in the residence halls.
2. All roommates or suitemates of the owner must sign an agreement allowing the Approved Animal to be in residence with them. In the event that one or more roommates or suitemates do not approve, either the owner and animal or the non-approving roommates or suitemates, as determined by the Housing Assignments office, may be moved to a different location.
3. Service Animals may travel freely with their owner throughout University Housing (and other areas of the University). Comfort Animals must be contained within the privately assigned residential area (room, suite, apartment) at all times, except when transported outside the private residential area in an animal carrier or controlled by leash or harness. When outside the residence, the owner of a Comfort Animal shall carry proof that the animal is an Approved Animal.
4. Vaccination: In accordance with local ordinances and regulations the animal must be immunized against diseases common to that type of animal. Dogs must have current vaccination against rabies and wear a rabies vaccination tag. Although not mandated, cats should have the normal shots required for a healthy animal. Local licensing requirements are followed.
5. Health: Animals, other than cats and dogs, to be housed in university housing must have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian. Documentation can be a vaccination certificate for the animal or a veterinarian's statement regarding the animal's health. The university has authority to direct that the animal receive veterinary attention. (Local licensing law is followed.)
6. Licensing: The university reserves the right to request documentation showing that the animal has been licensed.
7. Training: Service Animals must be properly trained.
8. Approved Animals may not be left overnight in University Housing to be cared for by another student. Animals must be taken with the student if they leave campus for a prolonged period.
9. Housing has the ability to relocate owner and Approved Animal as necessary according to current contractual agreements.
10. The Owner agrees to continue to abide by all other residential policies. Reasonable accommodation which may constitute an exception to the Community Living Standards that otherwise would prohibit having an animal does not constitute an exception to any other Community Living Standards.

Any violation of the above rules may result in immediate removal of the animal from the University and may be reviewed through the Residential Judicial Process and the Owner will be afforded all rights of due process and appeal as outlined in that process. Should the Approved Animal be removed from the premises for any reason, the owner is expected to fulfill his/her housing obligations for the remainder of the housing contract.