



Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD)
Maximizing Ability & Opportunity
Michigan State University
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SERVICE/ASSISTANCE ANIMAL POLICY IN UNIVERSITY HOUSING

I. Policy Statement

The University provides reasonable accommodations to housing residents with a documented disability. This Policy governs the use of Service Animals and Assistance Animals in University housing.

II. Definitions

A. Service Animal

The University recognizes “Service Animals” as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAA). Pursuant to that law, a service animal is defined 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.

Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the handler's disability. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition.

B. Assistance Animal

The University recognizes the broader category of “Assistance Animals” under the Fair Housing Act that provide physical and/or emotional support to individuals with disabilities. “Assistance Animals” are defined as a category of animals that may work, provide assistance, or perform physical tasks for an individual with a disability and/or provide necessary emotional support to an individual with a mental or psychiatric disability, but which are not considered Service Animals under the ADAAA.

III. Service Animals in Housing

A person may reside with a Service Animal in housing if the person has a disability and the animal meets the definition of a “Service Animal.” The Service Animal is permitted to accompany the resident to all areas of housing where residents are normally permitted to go.

Service animals are required to be at least 12 months of age unless an exception to this requirement has been approved by RCPD.

IV. Service Dogs in Training in Housing

- A. General information about the University’s policies governing service dogs in training can be found in the Service Animal Policy.
- B. Only adult dogs (twelve months of age or older) are considered service dogs in training under University policy. “Puppies in training” are not permitted in University buildings, except in accordance with Ordinance 23.00 or written permission from the Office of the Secretary of the Board of Trustees.
- C. A student who wishes to utilize a service dog in training in University housing must register with RCPD and seek approval through the reasonable accommodation process.

V. Assistance Animals in Housing

A person may reside with an Assistance Animal in housing as a reasonable accommodation if:

- A. The person has a disability;

- B. The animal is necessary to afford the person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling; and
- C. There is an identifiable relationship or nexus between the disability and the assistance the animal provides.

The Assistance Animal must be contained within the resident's privately assigned individual living quarters (room, suite, apartment) except to the extent the resident is taking the animal out for natural relief. When the Assistance Animal is outside the resident's private living quarters, the animal must be in an animal carrier or controlled by a leash or harness. The Assistance Animal is not permitted in other areas of the University (e.g., other residence halls or apartment buildings, dining facilities, academic buildings, athletic buildings and facilities, classrooms, labs, libraries, etc.)

Assistance animals are required to be at least 12 months of age unless an exception to this requirement has been approved by the RCPD.

VI. Owner Requirements

The owner¹ of a Service Animal or Assistance Animal approved to live in University housing must abide by the following conditions:

- A. The owner must comply with state and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing and vaccination.
- B. The owner must clean up after and properly dispose of the animal's waste in a safe and sanitary manner.
- C. The owner is financially responsible for any property damage caused by the animal beyond reasonable wear and tear.
- D. The animal must be properly housed, restrained, and under the owner's control at all times. If an animal is found loose or unattended outside the owner's private living quarters, the animal is subject to immediate removal from University housing.
- E. The owner may not leave the animal overnight in University housing to be cared for by any individual other than the owner. If the owner is absent from University housing overnight, the animal must accompany the owner

¹ For the purposes of this Policy, the term "owner" refers to the individual who has requested the accommodation and has received approval to have a Service Animal or Assistance Animal in housing.

or other arrangements to board the animal outside of University housing must be made. Local animal control authorities will be notified and asked to remove any animal that is left overnight in housing without its owner present. Owners are strongly encouraged to have plans for alternate housing in place for their animal in the event the owner must be absent from University housing overnight, including emergencies or other unexpected events.

VII. Approval Process for Student and Employee Residents

Service Animal

A resident who will utilize a service animal in housing is strongly encouraged but not required to identify and register with the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD). This will enable the University to appropriately plan for the animal's presence in housing and provide the resident with information about the full range of disability services provided by RCPD.

Assistance Animal:

- A. A resident desiring use of an assistance animal in University Housing must identify and register with the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD) in advance, at least 45 days before housing for the animal is needed, and provide the following documentation:
 1. Treating professional completes the Service/Assistance Animal in University Housing Documentation Form located at <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/documentation>
 2. University resident completes the Service/Assistance Animal Request Form located at <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/documentation>

The University reserves the right to request additional clarification or documentation.

- B. The RCPD will validate the need for approved accommodations and work with the resident and campus officials to facilitate a supportive network.
- C. The University may deny a request for an Assistance Animal in housing if the presence of the animal:
 1. Poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others;

2. Would cause substantial physical damage to the property of others;
3. Would pose an undue financial and administrative burden; or
4. Would fundamentally alter the nature of housing operations.

D. The University considers the following factors in determining whether to approve the presence of an Assistance Animal in housing:

1. The size of the animal and whether it is too large for available assigned housing space;
2. Whether the animal's presence would force another individual from individual housing (e.g., serious allergies);
3. Whether the animal's presence would otherwise violate individuals' right to peace and quiet enjoyment of their dwelling;
4. Whether the animal is housebroken and able to live with others in a reasonable manner;
5. Whether the animal's vaccinations are up to date;
6. Whether the animal poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the individual or others, such as injuring or acting aggressively; and
7. Whether the animal causes or has caused excessive damage to housing beyond reasonable wear and tear.

VIII. Approval Process for Non-Student and Non-Employee Residents

Service Animal:

A non-student or non-employee resident who will utilize a service animal in housing is strongly encouraged but not required to disclose this information in advance to Residence Education & Housing Services (REHS). This will enable the University to appropriately plan for the animal's presence and answer any questions the resident may have about this policy or its requirements for service animals in housing.

Assistance Animal:

The approval process for a non-student or non-employee resident to utilize an assistance animal in housing is the same as for students and employees above, with the following exceptions:

- A. The request should be filed with the Office of the University Physician instead of RCPD:

463 East Circle Drive, Room 346
East Lansing, MI 48824
Phone: 517.353.8933
Fax: 517.355.0332
Email: uphys@msu.edu

- B. The individual will be required to show proof of residency in University housing to initiate the process.

IX. Policy Exceptions

Individuals wishing to request a modification or exception to this policy as a reasonable accommodation should contact the RCPD.

X. Dispute Resolution Procedure

Disputes or disagreements about a disability determination, appropriateness of an accommodation, service/assistance quality, or an animal restriction should first be raised with the RCPD specialist involved. If the matter cannot be resolved, a [dispute resolution](#) should be submitted to RCPD.

Individuals may also file a written grievance with the University's Deputy ADA Coordinator for Grievances:

Deputy ADA Coordinator for Grievances
Office of Institutional Equity
4 Olds Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824
Phone: (517) 353-3922
Email: oi@msu.edu.

XI. Policy Implementation

The RCPD is responsible for implementing this policy. Success requires the cooperation of all students, staff and faculty.