

# Service, Assistance and Emotional Support Animal Policy

The University of Tampa (UT) fully supports the efforts and welfare of all its students. The UT faculty and staff are mindful of the diversity of the student body and act in ways to promote the academic success of each individual. It is in that spirit that UT has established a policy regarding Service, Assistance or Emotional Support Animals on campus.

## **SERVICE ANIMAL**

**Definition:** A service animal is a dog, or in certain cases, a miniature horse, that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Examples of such work or tasks 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 medication, 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.

**Service animals on campus:** UT generally allows service animals in all of its facilities when the animal is accompanied by its handler. The animal may not be permitted in some areas where it would pose a direct threat to health or safety or when the animal constitutes a fundamental alteration to the nature of the program. Furthermore, UT will not ask about the nature or extent of a person's disability, but, if not readily apparent, may make two inquiries to determine whether an animal qualifies as a Service Animal including:

1. If the animal is required because of a disability and;
2. What work or task the animal has been trained to perform.

**Use of service animals in the classroom:** It is strongly recommended that students who need the assistance of a service animal in the classroom register their disability with Student Accessibility Services. Documentation is not required to have a service animal in the classroom; however, by doing so, students will be able to:

- Document their need for an appropriate classroom accommodation
- Receive a letter of accommodation for their instructors at the beginning of each semester
- Access additional resources and services available to students with disabilities

**Use of service animals in the Residence Halls:** Students planning to live with a service animal in the residence halls must make this known on their application for housing or for general room selection, as applicable. While requests submitted after the recommended deadlines can be accepted and considered, there is no guarantee that late applicants' accommodation needs can be met. For new students, the housing application deadlines are May 1 for the fall semester and October 1 for the spring semester. For continuing students, housing applications are due on February 15. Roommates and suitemates will need to sign and submit an Animal Agreement Form to Student Accessibility Service. If an individual cannot live in a shared space with a service animal, Residence Life will work with the student to arrange an alternate accommodation. In addition:

- The handler is responsible for assuring the approved animal does not interfere with the

routine activities of the residence or cause difficulties for students who reside there.

- The owner is financially responsible for any expenses incurred for repairs, cleaning, and pest control above and beyond standard repairs and cleaning of the residence hall.

### **Service Animal maintenance and control requirements:**

- Service animals must be on a leash or in a carrier at all times when not in the residence of the handler.
- Animals must be controlled and cared for by the student handler at all times. This includes Winter, Summer and Spring breaks. Students may not leave animals in the residence halls during times when the residence halls are closed.
- The handler must accompany the service animal at all times while on campus.
- To the extent possible, the animal should be unobtrusive to other individuals in the community.
- The handler is responsible for the actions of their animal and may be referred for violations of the campus living policies or student conduct policies made by the animal (i.e. noise, vandalism, etc.).
- The handler should properly pick up and dispose of animal waste.

### **ASSISTANCE OR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL (ESA)**

**Definitions:** An assistance or emotional support animal alleviates one or more symptoms of a disability, but is not required to perform a task or service, and therefore would not qualify as a “service animal” under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In certain circumstances, assistance or emotional support animals that are not service animals under the ADA may still be permitted in UT’s Housing pursuant to the Fair Housing Act. A “Student Owner” is defined as a student with a qualified disability who requested an accommodation and was approved for an accommodation of an assistance or emotional support animal.

#### **Assistance or Emotional Support Animal accommodation request process:**

The determination of whether a student has a qualified disability-related need for an assistance or emotional support animal accommodation is an individualized and interactive process. Students should contact Student Accessibility Services to request and begin the process for the accommodation.

When applying for on-campus housing, the formal request for accommodation should also be included in the student’s application for housing or for general room selection. For new students, the housing application deadlines are May 1 for the fall semester and October 1 for the spring semester. For continuing students, housing applications are due on February 15 for the fall semester. The student must also submit required documentation (see below) along with a Disability Disclosure form to Student Accessibility Services. If seeking an accommodation after the housing deadlines, students should submit a completed formal request for an assistance or emotional support animal to Student Accessibility Services at least sixty (60) days prior to need of the accommodation. While requests submitted after the recommended deadlines can be accepted and considered, there is no guarantee that late applicants’ accommodation needs can be met.

As part of the interactive process, Student Accessibility Services will follow up with the student related to their request to set up a time to discuss the accommodation further or ask for

additional clarifying documentation. After reviewing all facts and documentation, Student Accessibility Services will decide about the student's eligibility for the accommodation and the reasonableness of the requested assistance or emotional support animal accommodation. Student Accessibility Services reviews all requests for accommodation on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, if a student wishes to change to a different assistance or emotional support animal than the one approved, the student must submit a new application for review with additional information from the medical care provider that verifies the medical need for a different animal.

**Documentation requirements for an Assistance or Emotional Support Animal accommodation:** Documentation of the need for an assistance or emotional support animal is required and should follow the Student Accessibility Services guidelines for documentation of disability. All documentation must be typed, on letterhead, and have a signature from the student's treating professional. The following information must be submitted to Student Accessibility Services:

- Diagnosis of disability from a physician or mental health professional, and whether that disability is temporary or permanent.
- Statement on how the animal serves as an accommodation for the diagnosed disability.
- Statement on how the need for the animal relates to the ability for the student to use and enjoy the residence halls.

**Assistance or Emotional Support Animals on campus:** Prior to approval from Student Accessibility Services, assistance or emotional support animals are not permitted on UT property. If an animal is brought on UT property and has not received prior approval by Student Accessibility Services, the student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Animals residing in the residence halls that have not been approved by Student Accessibility Services must be removed within twenty-four (24) hours.

**Assistance or Emotional Support Animals in the residence halls:** After approval for an accommodation, an assistance or emotional support animal is generally only permitted in the student owner's residence hall room and/or suite, after a signed Animal Agreement Form from all roommates and suitemates has been submitted to Student Accessibility Services. Residence Life has the right to reassign the student owner or other occupants of the room to another housing option within the residence halls if all residents are not in agreement or if care of the animal or interactions with other students, including roommates or suitemates, becomes a concern. Student Accessibility Services will attempt to accommodate all students, if possible. Assistance or emotional support animals are only permitted in common indoor areas as needed to enter or exit their residential building. Assistance or emotional support animals may be brought outside for natural relief, but must always be on a leash under the control of the student owner, and must remain in the immediate vicinity of their residence hall. General guidelines regarding assistance or emotional support animals in the residence halls include:

- The student owner is responsible for assuring the approved animal does not interfere with the routine activities of the residence or cause difficulties for students who reside there.
- The student owner is financially responsible for any expenses incurred for repairs, cleaning, and pest control above and beyond standard repairs and cleaning of the residence.
- The student owner is responsible for ensuring that the animal is in good health, clean, free of fleas and ticks, and is in compliance with all local and Florida state laws and requirements associated with licensing, vaccinations and other health regulations.

- The student owner's residence on campus must be kept clean and sanitary with no odors from the animal.
- The student owner must notify Student Accessibility Services and the Office of Residence Life if the approved animal is no longer needed.

### **Assistance or Emotional Support Animal control requirements:**

- The animal must be on a leash at all times when it is not in the residence of the student owner.
- All animals must be crated or otherwise contained when the student owner is not in the residence. If the student resides in apartment-style housing, the animal may be contained in the student owner's individual bedroom when the student owner is not present.
- Animals must be controlled and cared for by the student at all times including Winter, Summer and Spring breaks. Students may not leave animals in the residence halls during times when the residence halls are closed.
- To the extent possible, the animal should be unobtrusive to other individuals in the community.
- The student owner is required to properly pick up and dispose of animal waste in a safe and sanitary manner.
- The animal's behavior is considered the student owner's behavior. The student owner is responsible for the actions of the animal and may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for violations of the campus living policies or student conduct policies made by the animal (i.e. noise, vandalism, sanitation, etc.).
- Residence Life has the right to reassign the student owner or other occupants of the room to another accommodation within the residence halls if all residents are not in agreement or if care of the animal or interactions with other students, including roommates and suitemates, become a concern. Furthermore, Residence Life and/or Student Accessibility Services may remove any animal from the residence halls if there has been a violation of the Service, Assistance, and Emotional Support Animal policy or other University policies.

### **Animal Health and Well-being:**

- The student owner is required to make sure that the animal is well cared for at all times. Any evidence of neglect, mistreatment or abuse may result in removal of the animal and/or referral to the Office of Student Conduct.
- Animals must be vaccinated in accordance with local ordinances. For Hillsborough County's Animal Ordinance, visit the [Hillsborough County-Pet Ownership](#) page.
- Students must provide a bill of health, registration and vaccination records, along with a picture of the animal, to Student Accessibility Services. Students must submit updated vaccination records and a recent picture of the animal each year that they are residing in campus housing and re-requesting the accommodation. Student Accessibility Services will notify Campus Safety and Residence Life of the animal's approved presence on campus.

### **NOTICE TO CAMPUS COMMUNITY**

**Service Animals in the classroom:** Classroom instructors will be made aware of the presence of a service animal in the classroom by a letter of accommodation from the Associate Director of Academic Excellence Programs if the student chooses to register with Student Accessibility

Services.

**Assistance or Emotional Support Animals in the residence halls:** The residence hall staff will be made aware of the presence of assistance or emotional support animals in the specific residence hall in which they live. Roommates and suitemates of the student with an animal will sign an Animal Agreement Form. Roommates may request a room change if they do not want to share space with an animal. Residence Life has the right to reassign the student owner or other occupants of the room to another accommodation within the Residence Halls if all residents are not in agreement on the Animal Agreement Form or if care of the animal or interactions with other students, including roommates or suitemates, becomes a concern. Residence Life staff will assist the student or students with relocation. Each situation will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If any new roommates or suitemates are assigned to the residence, it is the student owner's responsibility to provide them with an Animal Agreement Form. It is also the student owner's responsibility to work with Residence Life staff should they choose to change rooms.

**Assistance or Emotional Support Animals on campus:** Assistance or emotional support animals are only permitted in the residence halls. Assistance or emotional support animals are not permitted in any other campus facilities. When an assistance or emotional support animal must go outside for natural relief, the student owner should make a direct exit from the building taking the shortest route and may not linger in common areas (such as a hallway or the lobby of the building). Once outside, assistance or emotional support animals must be on a leash under the control of the student owner at all times and must stay in the immediate vicinity of their residence hall.

**Conflicting health conditions:** Students with medical conditions that are affected by animals are asked to contact Student Accessibility Services with any concerns. UT will make reasonable effort to accommodate individuals with such medical conditions.

**Etiquette of the campus community:** Members of the campus community are not to touch, pet or feed a service, assistance or emotional support animal unless invited to do so. They are not to inquire into details about the student owner's disability. The nature of a person's disability is not required to be shared.

## **REMOVAL OF APPROVED ANIMAL**

**UT may exclude/remove an approved animal when:**

- The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
- The animal is out of control and the handler or student owner does not take effective action to control it.
- The animal's presence results in a fundamental alteration of the academic and/or residential program.
- The handler or student owner is found to be unable to care for an animal, or abuse or neglect is suspected.
- The handler or student owner does not comply with the Service, Assistance, and Emotional Support Animal policy or other UT policies.
- UT determines that an assistance and emotional support animal accommodation is no longer reasonable under the circumstances.

Once an animal has been removed from a residence, it is no longer approved by

Student Accessibility Services, and therefore may not return to UT property for any reason. If a student wishes to bring a previously removed animal back on to campus, they must wait one calendar year to reapply with Student Accessibility Services for approval.

### **APPEALS PROCESS**

Should a student wish to appeal any decision made regarding a service animal or an assistance or emotional support animal, the student must write a letter outlining the reason for the appeal within two business days of delivery of the decision to the handler's or student owner's Spartan email account. The letter must include the specific reason(s) the decision should be reconsidered and any relevant documentation supporting their appeal. The animal may not reside on campus during the appeal process. Appeals involving the student's residence hall should be addressed to the Associate Dean of Student Conduct, Orientation and Residence Life. Appeals related to academic environments should be addressed to the Associate Provost. Any questions about the appeals process should be directed to Student Accessibility Services.

Appeals will be considered by committee and a decision will be rendered to the handler or student owner in writing within 10 business days of the receipt of the appeal. All decisions are final.

**\*By my signature, I verify that I have read, understand, and will abide by the policies outlined here.**

**Student Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **UT ID#** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



