

# The University of North Carolina Asheville

## Assistance Animal Policy and Agreement

The University of North Carolina Asheville (“UNC Asheville” or “University”) recognizes the importance of “Service Animals” as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) and the broader category of “Assistance Animals” under the Fair Housing Act that provide physical and/or emotional support to individuals with disabilities. UNC Asheville is committed to allowing individuals with disabilities the use of a Service Animal on campus to facilitate their full-participation and equal access to the University’s programs and activities. UNC Asheville is also committed to allowing Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) necessary to provide individuals with disabilities equal opportunity to use and enjoy University housing. This Policy explains the specific requirements applicable to an individual’s use of an Assistance Animal in University housing. UNC Asheville reserves the right to amend this Policy as circumstances require. This policy applies solely to “Assistance Animals” which may be necessary in University housing. It does not apply to “service animals” as defined by the ADAAA.

Although it is the policy of UNC Asheville that individuals are generally prohibited from having animals of any type in University housing, UNC Asheville will consider a request by an individual with a disability for reasonable accommodation from this prohibition to allow an Assistance Animal that is necessary because of a disability and reasonable accommodation. However, no Assistance Animal may be kept in University housing at any time prior to the individual receiving approval as a reasonable accommodation pursuant to this Policy.

### **I. Definitions**

#### **A. Assistance Animal**

“Assistance Animals” are 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 that alleviates one or more identified symptoms of an individual’s disability, but which are not considered Service Animals under the ADAAA and UNC Asheville’s Service Animal Policy.

Service Animals owners must have an affirmative answer to the following questions:

1. Does the person seeking to use and live with the animal have a disability — i.e., a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities?
2. Does the person making the request have a disability-related need for an assistance animal? In other words, does the animal work, provide assistance, perform tasks or services for the benefit of a person with a disability, or provide emotional support that alleviates one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of a person's existing disability

Service Animals are professionally trained, but in other cases Assistance Animals, such as Emotional Support Animals, they may provide the necessary support to individuals with disabilities without any formal training or certification. Any animal may serve a person with a disability as an Assistance Animal.<sup>1</sup>

The questions in determining if an Emotional Support Animal will be allowed in University housing is whether or not the ESA is necessary because of the individual’s disability to afford the individual an equal opportunity to use and enjoy University housing, and whether its presence in University housing is reasonable. However, even if the individual with a disability establishes necessity for an Assistance Animal and it is allowed in University housing, an Assistance Animal is not permitted in other areas of the University (e.g. dining facilities, libraries, academic buildings, athletic buildings and facilities, classrooms, labs, individual centers, etc.).

#### **B. Owner**

The “Owner” is the individual who has requested the accommodation and has received approval to bring an Assistance Animal into University Housing.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that animals that may be needed because of a disability may be identified by various names. For example, an individual may identify the animal as a companion animal, assistance animal, or emotional support animal.

### **C. The Office of Academic Accessibility**

The Office of Academic Accessibility collaborates with students, faculty, and staff to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equitable access to all UNC Asheville programs and activities.

## **II. Criteria for Determining If Presence of the Assistance Animal is Reasonable**

- A. University housing is unique in several aspects including the mandatory assignment of roommates for many individuals and the mandate that individuals must share a room or suite in certain residence halls. To ensure that the presence of assistance animals is not an undue administrative burden or fundamental alteration of University housing, UNC Asheville reserves the right to assign an individual with an assistance animal to a single room without a roommate.
- B. All requests for assistance animals should be made directly through the Office of Academic Accessibility. The OAA is solely responsible for determining the initial request, i.e., whether an assistance animal is a necessary and appropriate accommodation for the student's disability. If approved, the student should review UNC-Asheville's Assistance Animal Policy and Agreement, provided by (a Residential Education Representative, or OAA). This document provides guidance regarding what animals may be considered reasonable. A request for an assistance animal may be denied as unreasonable if the presence of the animal: (1) imposes an undue financial and/or administrative burden; (2) fundamentally alters University housing policies; and/or (3) poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others or would cause substantial property damage to the property of others, including University property.
- C. UNC Asheville may consider the following factors, among others, as evidence in determining whether the presence of the animal is reasonable or in the making of housing assignments for individuals with Assistance Animals:
  - a. The size of the animal is too large for available assigned housing space;
  - b. The animal's presence would force another individual from individual housing (e.g. serious allergies);
  - c. The animal's presence otherwise violates individuals' right to peace and quiet enjoyment;
  - d. The animal is not housebroken or is unable to live with others in a reasonable manner;
  - e. The animal's vaccinations are not up-to-date;
  - f. The animal poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the individual or others such as aggressive behavior towards or injuring the individual or others; or
  - g. The animal causes or has caused excessive damage to housing beyond reasonable wear and tear;
  - h. The animal must be spayed or neutered.

UNC Asheville will not limit room assignments for individuals with Assistance Animals to any particular building or buildings because the individual needs an Assistance Animal because of a disability.

## **III. Access to University Facilities by Assistance Animals**

### **A. Emotional Support Animals**

An Emotional Support Animal must be contained within the privately assigned individual living accommodations (e.g., room, suite, and apartment) except to the extent the individual is taking the animal out for natural relief. (As a reminder, Service Animals do not have these same limitations). When an Emotional Support Animal is outside the private individual living accommodations, it must be in an animal carrier or controlled by a leash or harness.

Emotional Support Animals are not allowed in any University facilities other than University residence halls (e.g. dormitories, suites, apartments, etc.) to which the individual is assigned.

### **B. Dominion and Control**

Notwithstanding the restrictions set forth herein, the Assistance Animal must be properly housed and restrained or otherwise under the dominion and control of the Owner at all times. No Owner shall permit the animal to go loose or run at large. If an animal is found running at large, the animal is subject to capture and confinement and immediate removal from University housing.

#### **IV. Individual's Responsibilities for Assistance Animal**

If the University grants an individual's request to live with an Assistance Animal, the individual is solely responsible for the custody and care of the Assistance Animal and must meet the following requirements:

##### **A. General Responsibilities**

1. The Owner must abide by current city, county, and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to licensing, vaccination, and other requirements for animals. It is the individual's responsibility to know and understand these ordinances, laws, and regulations. The University has the right to require documentation of compliance with such ordinances, laws, and/or regulations, which may include a vaccination certificate. The University reserves the right to request documentation showing that the animal has been licensed.
2. The Owner is required to clean up after and properly dispose of the animal's waste in a safe and sanitary manner and, when provided, must use animal relief areas designated by UNC Asheville.
3. The Owner is required to ensure the animal is well cared for at all times. Any evidence of mistreatment or abuse may result in immediate removal of the Assistance Animal and/or discipline for the individual.
4. UNC Asheville will not ask for or require an individual with a disability to pay a fee or surcharge for an approved Assistance Animal.
5. An individual with a disability may be charged for any damage caused by his or her Assistance Animal beyond reasonable wear and tear to the same extent that it charges other individuals for damages beyond reasonable wear and tear. The Owner's living accommodations may also be inspected for fleas, ticks or other pests if necessary as part of the University's standard or routine inspections. 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. The University shall have the right to bill the individual's account for unmet obligations under this provision.
6. The Owner must fully cooperate with University personnel with regard to meeting the terms of this Policy and developing procedures for care of the animal (e.g., cleaning the animal, feeding/watering the animal, designating an outdoor relief area, disposing of feces, etc.).
7. Assistance Animals may not be left overnight in University Housing to be cared for by any individual other than the Owner. If the Owner is to be absent from his/her residence hall overnight or longer, the animal must accompany the Owner. The Owner is responsible for ensuring that the Assistance Animal is contained, as appropriate, when the Owner is not present during the day while attending classes or other activities.
8. The Owner agrees to abide by all equally applicable residential policies that are unrelated to the individual's disability such as assuring that the animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the residence or cause difficulties for individuals who reside there.
9. The animal is allowed in University housing only as long as it is necessary because of the Owner's disability. The Owner must notify the Office of Academic Accessibility in writing if the Assistance Animal is no longer needed or is no longer in residence. To replace an Assistance Animal, the new animal must be necessary because of the Owner's disability and the Owner must follow the procedures in this Policy and the Reasonable Accommodation Policy when requesting a different animal.
10. UNC Asheville personnel shall **not** be required to provide care or food for any Assistance Animal including, but not limited to, removing the animal during emergency evacuation for events such as a fire alarm. Emergency personnel will determine whether to remove the animal and may not be held responsible for the care, damage to, or loss of the animal.

11. The individual must provide written consent for Accessibility Services to disclose information regarding the request for and presence of the Assistance Animal to those individuals who may be impacted by the presence of the animal including, but not limited to, Residential Education personnel and potential and/or actual roommate(s)/neighbor(s). Such information shall be limited to information related to the animal and shall not include information related to the individual's disability.

**V. Removal of Assistance Animal**

The University may require the individual to remove the animal from University housing if:

- 1) The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others or causes substantial property damage to the property of others;
  - 2) The animal's presence results in a fundamental alteration of a University program;
  - 3) The Owner does not comply with the Owner's Responsibilities set forth above; or
  - 4) The animal or its presence creates an unmanageable disturbance or interference with the university community.
- The University will base such determinations upon the consideration of the behavior of the particular animal at issue, and not on speculation or fear about the harm or damages an animal may cause. The Owner will be afforded all rights of due process and appeal as outlined in that process. Should the Assistance 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.

By my signature below, I verify that I have read, understand and will abide by the requirements outlined here and I agree to provide the additional information required to complete my Request for a Reasonable Accommodation under the University's Assistance Animal Policy for University Housing.

**Acknowledgement and Release of Information Consent Form**

I have read and understand the Assistance Animal Policy and Agreement and I agree to abide by the requirements applicable to Assistance Animals. I understand that if I fail to meet the requirements set forth in the Policy, UNC Asheville has the right to remove the Assistance Animal and I will be nonetheless required to fulfill my housing, academic, and all other obligations for the remainder of the housing contract.

I furthermore give permission to the Accessibility Services Office to disclose to others impacted by the presence of my Assistance Animal (e.g., Residence Education staff, potential and/or actual roommate(s)/neighbor(s)) that I will be living with an animal as an accommodation. I understand that this information will be shared with the intent of preparing for the presence of the Assistance Animal and/or resolving any potential issues associated with the presence of the Assistance animal.

I further recognize that the presence of the Assistance Animal may be noticed by others visiting or residing in University Housing and agree that staff may acknowledge the presence of the animal, and explain that under certain circumstances Assistance Animals are permitted for persons with disabilities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Individual Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Accessibility Services Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Residential Education Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

For more information, please review the Service Animals and Assistance Animals for People with Disabilities in Housing and HUD-Funded Programs document [here](#)