

## **Service and Assistance Animal Policy**

Columbia University recognizes the importance of Service and Assistance Animals for individuals with disabilities and has established the following policy regarding Service Animals (and Service Animals in training) and Assistance Animals, to assist people with disabilities. Set forth below are specific requirements and guidelines concerning the appropriate use of and protocols associated with Service Animals and Assistance Animals. Columbia reserves the right to amend this policy as circumstances require.

### **Section I. Definitions**

#### **A. Service Animal**

- A dog or miniature horse that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. All other types of animals do not qualify as Service Animals.
- The work or task a Service Animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Examples of such work or tasks conducted by a Service Animal include but is not limited to:
  - Guiding people who are blind
  - Alerting people who are deaf
  - 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
- Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support are not Service Animals, but may qualify as Assistance Animals (refer to section below for further information).
- Service Animals are permitted throughout campus with the exception of certain locations because of health and safety restrictions (i.e. where the animals may be in danger, or where their use may compromise the integrity of research).

#### **B. Assistance Animal**

- Animals that work, provide assistance, or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability
- Animals that provide emotional support which alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability.
- Unlike a Service Animal, an Assistance Animal does not assist a person with a disability with activities of daily living, nor does it accompany a person with a disability at all times.
- Assistance Animals may be considered for access to university housing or residence halls
- Assistance Animals are not permitted in other areas of the university (e.g. libraries, academic buildings, classrooms, labs, student center, etc.).

### **C. Service Animal in Training**

- Individuals qualified to train service 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 a service animal, you must contact Disability Services and comply with the requirements set forth in this policy.

### **D. Pet**

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

### **E. Approved Animal**

- Service Animal or Assistance Animal that has been granted as a reasonable accommodation under this policy.

### **E. Owner**

- Individual with a disability who has requested the accommodation and has received approval to bring the “approved animal” on campus.

## **Section II. Procedures to have Service Animals in University Housing**

**Students planning to bring their Service Animals to reside in University housing are required to follow the steps outlined below:**

1. Students seeking permission to keep a Service Animal in University housing must submit the appropriate Disability Housing Accommodations Registration Form so that the student can be assigned to the most appropriate housing location with their service animal, considering the student’s needs and preferences.

The registration form to request a housing accommodation is available through Disability Services at [http://health.columbia.edu/services/ods/housing#housing\\_requestforms](http://health.columbia.edu/services/ods/housing#housing_requestforms)

2. Requests for Service Animals in housing do NOT require documentation of disability, however, the Disability Housing Accommodations Registration Form is required.
3. Students approved for a Service Animal will be contacted by Disability Services to arrange a meeting to review the requirements and responsibilities as outlined in this policy.
4. Upon approval of a Service Animal, residential building staff will be notified as appropriate. The student’s roommate(s) or suitemate(s) will be notified (if applicable) to solicit their acknowledgement of the approval, and notify them that the approved animal will be residing in shared assigned living space.
5. If the function performed by the animal does not constitute a task or work, the animal will be treated as an assistance animal, subject to the requirements of the Assistance Animals section below.

### **Section III. Procedures for requesting to have Assistance Animals in University housing as a reasonable accommodation**

**Students planning to bring their Assistance Animals to reside in University housing are required to follow the steps outlined below:**

1. Students seeking permission to keep an Assistance Animal in University housing must submit the appropriate Disability Housing Accommodations Registration Form so that the student can be assigned to the most appropriate housing location with their assistance animal, considering the student's needs and preferences. In addition, the student must submit documentation of his/her disability.

The registration form to request a housing accommodation is available through Disability Services at [http://health.columbia.edu/services/ods/housing#housing\\_requestforms](http://health.columbia.edu/services/ods/housing#housing_requestforms)

2. Documentation of the need for an Assistance Animal should follow Disability Services guidelines for documentation of disability, and should generally include the following information:
  - a. Verification of the individual's disability from a physician, psychiatrist, social worker, or other mental health professional,
  - b. Statement on how the animal serves as an accommodation for the verified disability, and
  - c. Statement on how the need for the animal relates to the ability of the resident/student or live-in family member to use and enjoy the living arrangements provided by the University.
  - d. Current documentation of items requested in a., b., and c. (dated within the last 6 months).

The Disability Services' guidelines for documentation of disability are available at [http://health.columbia.edu/forms#Disability\\_Services](http://health.columbia.edu/forms#Disability_Services)

3. Students approved to house an Assistance Animal will be contacted by Disability Services to arrange a meeting to review the requirements and responsibilities as outlined in this policy.
4. Students whose request for an Assistance Animal through this process is not granted, will have the opportunity to appeal such decisions. All appeals are reviewed by the Associate Vice President of Columbia Health or a designee. Students will receive information about the appeals process upon notification of decision of request for disability housing accommodations.
5. Upon approval of an Assistance Animal, residential building staff will be notified as appropriate.
6. Upon approval of an Assistance Animal, the student's roommate(s) or suitemate(s) will be notified (if applicable) to solicit their acknowledgement of the approval, and notify them that the approved animal will be residing in shared assigned living space.

## **Section IV. Conflicting Health Conditions**

Students with medical condition(s) that are affected by animals (e.g., respiratory diseases, asthma, severe allergies) must contact Disability Services if they have a health or safety related concern about exposure to a Service or Assistance Animal. The University is prepared to also reasonably accommodate individuals with such medical conditions that require accommodation when living in proximity to Service or Assistance Animals.

Housing personnel will make a reasonable effort to notify tenants in University housing where the Approved Animal will be located.

Disability Services will resolve any conflict as a result of the presence of an Approved Animal in a timely manner. Staff members will consider the conflicting needs and/or accommodations of all persons involved. Disability Services staff may use Columbia Health as a resource for information on health issues.

## **Section V. Owner's Responsibilities in University Housing**

1. The Owner is responsible for assuring that the Approved Animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the residence 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 Disability Services 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 for Reasonable Accommodation.
5. The Owner's residence may be inspected for fleas, ticks or other pests once a semester or as needed. The applicable housing office for the residence hall 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.
6. For students in the Residence Halls and/or Apartment shares, 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 appropriate Housing office for the residence location, may be moved to a different location.

7. Service Animals may travel freely with their owner throughout University Housing (and other areas of the University, see Section VI part G of this document). Assistance 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 an Assistance Animal shall carry proof that the animal is an Approved Animal.
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 overnight.
9. The Owner agrees to continue to abide by all other residential policies.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. The Owner undertakes to comply with animal health and well-being requirements as set forth in Section VI, item C.

## **Section VI. Guidelines for Maintaining an Approved Animal at Columbia University**

### **A. Introduction**

The following guidelines apply to all Approved Animals and their owners, unless the nature of the documented disability of the owner precludes adherence to these guidelines, and permission for a variance from the guidelines has been granted by Disability Services.

### **B. Care and Supervision:**

Care and supervision of the animal are the responsibility of the Owner. The Owner is required to maintain control of the animal at all times.

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 before being disposed of. Litter boxes should be placed on mats so that waste is not tracked onto carpeted surfaces.

## **C. Animal Health and Well-being**

1. 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.
2. Health: Animals, other than cats and dogs, 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.
3. Licensing: The university reserves the right to request documentation showing that the animal has been licensed (e.g., New York law requires that every dog be licensed).
4. Training: Service Animals must be properly trained.
5. Leash: If appropriate, the animal must be on a leash unless the leash would inhibit the animal's ability to be of service.
6. Other Conditions: Disability Services may place other reasonable conditions or restrictions on the animals depending on the nature and characteristics of the animal.

## **D. Requirements for Faculty, Staff, Students, and Other Members of the University Community**

**Members of the University community are required to abide by the following practices:**

1. Allow a Service Animal to accompany its Owner at all times and in all places on campus, except where animals are specifically prohibited because of health and safety restrictions.
2. Do not ask for details about the owner's disabilities. The nature of a person's disability is a private matter.
3. Do not touch or pet a Service or Assistance Animal unless invited to do so by its Owner.
4. Do not feed a Service or Assistance Animal.
5. Do not deliberately startle a Service or Assistance Animal.
6. Do not separate or attempt to separate an Owner from his or her Service or Assistance Animal.

Members of the University Community may contact Disability Services at 212-854-2388 or [disability@columbia.edu](mailto:disability@columbia.edu) with any questions or concerns regarding a Service or Assistance Animal.

## **E. Removal of Approved Animal**

The University may exclude/remove an Approved Animal when either of the following occur:

1. The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others
2. The animal's presence results in a fundamental alteration of the University's program
3. The owner does not comply with Owner's Responsibilities in University Housing,
4. The animal or its presence creates an unmanageable disturbance or interference with the Columbia community.

## F. Damage

Owners are solely responsible for any damage to persons or University property caused by their animals.

## G. Areas Off Limits to Service Animals

The University may prohibit the use of Service Animals in certain locations because of health and safety restrictions (e.g. where the animals may be in danger, or where their use may compromise the integrity of research). Restricted areas may include, but are not limited to, the following areas: custodial closets, boiler rooms, facility equipment rooms, research laboratories, classrooms with research/demonstration animals, areas where protective clothing is necessary, wood and metal shops, motor pools, rooms with heavy machinery, and areas outlined in state law as being inaccessible to animals.

Service Animals may be granted access to restricted areas on a case-by-case basis by contacting Disability Services and the appropriate department representative.

## H. Areas Off Limits to Assistance Animals

All buildings and other areas of campus, except for privately assigned living space in housing, are off limits to approved Assistance Animals without prior authorization from Disability Services.

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

\_\_\_\_\_

Resident Owner Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Disability Services Representative

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Housing Representative

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## **Section VII. Roommate/Suitemate Acknowledgement**

(Only Applicable to residents in Residence Halls and/or Apartment Shares)

By my signature below, I understand that I will share the common areas of my assigned residential space with the animal approved by this agreement. Should I have any concerns regarding the care and control of the approved animal, I will discuss my concerns with the approved animal's owner and then with Disability Services at (212) 854-2388 or [disability@columbia.edu](mailto:disability@columbia.edu) if the approved animal owner and I cannot come to an agreement.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Resident's Name

UNI

Date

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Resident's Name

UNI

Date

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Resident's Name

UNI

Date

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Resident's Name

UNI

Date



**Section VIII. Approved Animal Registration Form**

Owner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's UNI: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Animal's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Animal: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Description of Animal: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please attach the Veterinarian's verification that the animal has all Veterinary-recommended vaccinations to maintain the animal's health and prevent contagious disease. Also include a copy of New York's required animal license (for dogs only).**