



AccessAbility Services Emotional Support Animal Request Guideline and Procedure

General Guideline:

Western Connecticut State University (WCSU) is committed to reasonably accommodating qualified students with disabilities who may require the use of an Emotional Support Animal in accordance with the Fair Housing Act (FHA). An Emotional Support Animal is an animal that has been determined necessary to mitigate the effects of a physical or mental disability by a psychologist, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner or licensed social worker. Emotional Support Animals are identified as therapy, comfort, or physical assistance animals that alleviate one or more identified symptoms or effects of a student's documented disability to allow them equal opportunity to reside in University housing. Emotional support animals are not service animals, as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. A "pet" is an animal kept for ordinary use and companionship. A pet is not considered an assistance animal, nor is it covered by these guidelines. While the law requires that priority consideration be given to the specific methods requested by a student, it does not require that a particular accommodation be granted if it is deemed not reasonable or other suitable accommodations are available.

WCSU will accept and consider requests for reasonable accommodation in University Housing at any time. The individual making the request for accommodation should complete and provide the Housing Accommodation Request Form as soon as practicable possible before moving into University housing. However, if the request for accommodation is made fewer than 60 days before the individual intends to move into University housing, WCSU cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet the individual's accommodation needs during the first semester or term of occupancy. If the need for accommodation arises when an individual already resides in University housing, he/she should contact AccessAbility Services and complete the Housing Accommodation Request Form. WCSU cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet the accommodation needs during the semester or term in which the request is received.

Emotional Support Animals are restricted to on-campus housing and are **only** allowed in the residence hall room, suite or apartment the individual with a disability is assigned to by Housing and Residence Life. They are not permitted in classrooms, offices, auditoriums, gymnasiums, dining halls, or other similar on-campus settings. An individual with a disability may be asked to remove an Emotional Support Animal from University housing if the animal's behavior is not consistent with behavior expected in a residential environment, poses a substantial or direct threat to personal or public safety, causes substantial physical damage to the property of others, or poses an undue financial or administrative burden on the University.

The University is not responsible for the care or supervision of an Emotional Support Animal. An Emotional Support Animal is not required to have special training, certification or be licensed as an Emotional Support Animal; however, the animal shall be under the control of the individual with a disability at all times. An Emotional Support Animal shall have a harness, leash, other tether, or cage unless either the individual is unable because of a disability or the use would interfere with the animal's safe, effective performance of assistance, in which case the animal must be otherwise under the individual's control (e.g., voice control, signals or other effective means).

Students approved for the use of an Emotional Support Animal in University housing must comply with all provisions of the Emotional Support Animal Agreement, University policies and the terms of the housing contract. While the University is committed to reasonably accommodating individuals with disabilities who require an Emotional Support Animal, the University is also mindful of the health and safety concerns of the campus community. To that end, the University will request veterinary verification of routine care of the animal, including licenses and vaccines prior to an approved Emotional Support Animal being able to enter University housing. All dogs will be required to be licensed in Danbury, Connecticut.

Procedure:

- ❖ A student who is requesting to have an Emotional Support Animal in University housing should complete an **Accommodation Intake Form** and **Housing Accommodation Request Form** available online or at AccessAbility Services, located in White Hall, Room 005.
- ❖ The student must submit disability documentation consistent with AAS' established documentation guidelines from an appropriately qualified and credentialed health care provider who has an ongoing therapeutic relationship established as well as from the state where the student is from or from the state of Connecticut identifying the student's disability or condition, and the impact of the condition upon a major life activity, a statement regarding the necessity of the Emotional Support Animal for the individual to use or enjoy campus housing, and a statement regarding the relationship between the disability and the relief the Emotional Support Animal provides. The health care provider cannot be related to the student. Documentation must be presented on official letterhead, typed, and signed by the health care provider.
- ❖ Once information is received, AAS will contact the student to discuss and discuss the request.
- ❖ All housing accommodation requests are reviewed by a Housing Accommodations Review Committee comprised of the following departments: AccessAbility Services, Housing & Residence Life, Health Service, and the Counseling Center.
- ❖ Prior to an accommodation request being reviewed by the Housing Accommodations Review Committee, students must ensure the following :
 - Any applications required by Housing & Residence Life are completed
 - Any Housing & Residence Life deadlines and requirements (i.e., housing application, room deposit, health vaccines, etc.) are met
- ❖ The committee will review the request and the student will be contacted through their WCSU email with appropriate next steps.
- ❖ Housing accommodation approvals are **only** valid for the requested year; students must request housing accommodations each academic year through a **Housing Accommodation Request Form**. Please note: additional documentation or a documentation update may be requested by AAS for each year. Housing & Residence Life require students to complete a **Housing Intent Form** between the fall and the spring semester. Current students who are approved for housing accommodations and plan to remain in the same room for the spring semester should indicate their preference to remain in their current room on their intent form.
- ❖ Current students who are approved for housing accommodations and are planning to request new housing accommodations between the fall and the spring semester will need

to complete and submit a new **Housing Accommodation Request Form** and provide necessary supporting documentation to AAS by November 1st. Housing accommodation requests received and reviewed after the deadline will be based on housing occupancy/availability at that time.

If approved for the accommodation of an Emotional Support Animal:

- ❖ The student must complete an **Emotional Support Animal Agreement, Emotional Support Animal Registration Form, Roommate Agreement** and submit requested information regarding their Emotional Support Animal (*i.e.*, veterinary verification of routine care) to Housing & Residence Life prior to the Emotional Support Animal being allowed in Housing & Residence Life.
- ❖ Animals must be licensed in accordance with local regulations, must have all appropriate vaccinations, be in good health, and receive an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian.
- ❖ According to Connecticut law, any animal that has reached a proper level of maturity must be licensed and must display a license on its collar at all times. Licensing must be obtained from the City of Danbury.
- ❖ The animal shall be kept in the student's room and will not be allowed to roam the on-campus residence.
- ❖ When the Emotional Support Animal is taken outside, it shall be on a leash, harness, caged or other tether. The student is responsible for picking up the Emotional Support Animal's waste immediately.
- ❖ The Emotional Support Animal shall at all times be under control of the student with a disability. The student with a disability may be instructed to remove the Emotional Support Animal from on-campus housing if the animal causes damage or destruction or is creating a disturbance. The student with a disability will be charged for any damage or destruction caused by the Emotional Support Animal.

Any questions regarding the Emotional Support Animal request guideline and procedure should be directed to Elisabeth Morel, Director, at 203-837-8225 (voice), 203-837-3235 (TTY), or via e-mail at morele@wcsu.edu.