

# Assistance Animal / Emotional Support Animal in Student Housing

## Georgetown College Assistance Animal Policy

Georgetown College is committed to ensuring equal access to all persons, as required by law. While Georgetown College's Housing Policy states that pets, except for fish in tanks of 3.5 gallons or less, are not permitted in Georgetown College Student Housing, the College will allow exceptions to the no-pet policy and permit Assistance Animals (as defined by the Fair Housing Act<sup>[1]</sup>) to qualified students with disabilities who require the use of such support.

Federal nondiscrimination laws define a person with a disability to include any (1) individual with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; (2) individual with a record of such impairment; or (3) individual who is regarded as having such an impairment.

Assistance Animals include **emotional support animals (ESA)** prescribed by a licensed healthcare or mental healthcare provider to an individual with a disability as part of the individual's treatment plan and is deemed by the provider as therapeutically or medically necessary to manage the individual's medical condition or mental health by alleviating one or more identified symptoms of the individual's disability.

Students seeking approval for an assistance animal, except for a service animal, to live with them in Student Housing are to follow the Assistance Animal Request Process described as described below. Students with a service animal should contact the Disability Services Office prior to moving in. The Service Animals policy can be found in the Student Handbook and on the [Disability Services webpage](#).

<sup>[1]</sup> An Assistance Animal is an animal that works, provides assistance, or performs tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, or provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's documented disability.

## Assistance Animal / ESA process

### I. Documentation Guidelines

1. A student wishing to request an assistance animal should contact the Disability Services Office to begin the request process in conjunction with supporting medical documentation. The medical documentation must be completed by a licensed healthcare or mental healthcare professional qualified to diagnose and treat the related disability. The provider should have an established professional medical or therapeutic relationship with the student and prescribes the animal as part of the student's comprehensive treatment plan. The request must be based on an individualized assessment and explain how the animal's presence provides equal access to Student Housing. In particular, it must explain the nexus between the impact of the disability and the support the animal provides to mitigate symptoms. The ESA Request Form, found on the Disability Services webpage, can be used for this purpose. Letters purchased online for the sole purpose of falsely representing a pet as an emotional support animal will not be accepted.
2. The requesting student is asked to supplement the medical documentation with a personal statement in which the history and relationship with the animal are explained in their own words. Practices or protocols in care (feeding, handling, cage cleaning, adequate exercise, veterinary attention, etc.) should be incorporated into this statement to encourage students to thoroughly think about how an animal in the shared living environment of Student Housing may affect others and how potential risks or negative impacts can be circumvented. As medical documentation is often concise and lacking depth, a detailed statement from the student allows the Housing Accommodation Team (HAT) to make a well-informed decision. Information obtained from the healthcare provider, as well as the student directly, will be kept private and not discussed with others outside the Housing Accommodation Team.
3. In addition to the above information, the requesting student must provide the following:

- Proof of an up-to-date exam for the animal from a licensed veterinarian that attests to the absence of communicable diseases and parasites to show that the animal does not pose a notable risk of zoonosis.
- Submittal of up-to-date vaccination records as well as licensing, as required by Kentucky State law and Georgetown City ordinance. Vaccination tags should be attached to the harness or collar worn by the animal.
- Verification of regular flea treatment for cats, dogs, and other animals as appropriate.
- Name, Address, and Phone Number of an alternate caregiver who can take care of the animal in case of an emergency. Notify Residence Life Staff and Disability Services of any changes. You can provide this information at the end of this document.
- This signed document, to verify that the student has read, understood, and will abide by the guidelines as outlined.

1.-3. can be submitted to Disability Services in person, via mail, email, or fax.

## Assistance Animal / ESA Request process

The Housing Accommodation Team, which is comprised of representatives from the Disability Services, Counseling, and Residence Life offices, will review the request after medical documentation and personal statement (see documentation guidelines 1. and 2.) have been received. HAT generally meets bi-weekly.

The following criteria are considered when reviewing an Assistance Animal request:

- established disability
- documented need of the support the animal provides
- type of animal
- age of animal
- size of animal

Due to room sizes in Student Housing, the space available may not adequately meet the welfare needs of larger-sized animals and/or fit an appropriately-sized crate in the room. Requests for large-size assistance animals will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

After HAT has reviewed the request, the student will be invited to meet with Disability Services to have a conversation about the request as well as other possible accommodations. The meeting can be held in person or virtually. Depending on individual circumstances, HAT may or may not have to meet again to consider additional information for a final decision.

If the decision for an assistance animal is **favorable**, the requesting student must submit the remaining documentation listed under 3. to Disability Services. Once all documentation has been received, the student and Student Housing will be notified via email of the animal approval by Disability Services. Approval for an Assistance Animal is generally for the current academic year.

**No animal is allowed in Student Housing prior to this approval.**

If the decision for an assistance animal was **not approved**, the student may file an appeal through the appeal process as outlined in the Disability Services Grievance Policy, posted on the [Disability Services webpage](#).

## unapproved animals

Any unapproved animal living in Student Housing violates the no-pets policy and will be subject to Residence Life response. Students who are found to violate this policy will have to resolve this issue and remove the animal from campus before HAT will begin or continue with the approval process.

## Student's responsibilities

Students granted the accommodation of an ESA in their residence hall shall be subject to the following rules, in addition to any other College rules and regulations.

1. Any assistance animal must reside with the student for whom it was approved. Assistance animals are approved for the assigned residence hall, townhouse, or apartment only.
2. Unforeseen room maintenance or inspections can cause a disturbance in an animal's daily routine. The student is responsible for ensuring that the animal is safe when the student is away from their room.
3. The student must keep their animal in a carrier or properly restrained by leash or harness when outside the student's assigned living space.
4. An assistance animal cannot unduly interfere with opportunities for other residents to enjoy shared spaces or with the routine activities of Student Housing.
5. Assistance animals must be housebroken, when applicable. The student is responsible for the cleanup of the animal's waste (both indoors and outdoors) in a prompt manner. Any waste must be disposed of in a safe and sanitary manner.
6. The student's living accommodations may be inspected for fleas, ticks, or other pests if necessary. If fleas, ticks, or other pests are detected through inspection, the student will be billed for the expense of any pest treatment beyond standard pest management in Student Housing.
7. The student agrees to provide their animal with appropriate veterinary care and treatment. That includes but is not limited to up-to-date vaccinations, regular flea treatments, routine medications, and other requirements as outlined by local, county, and state law.
8. Assistance animals may not pose a danger or threat to the health and safety of other students, staff, faculty, or guests.
9. The student assumes all responsibility for the animal's actions. The student is solely responsible for any injuries to persons or damage to property caused by the animal. The student may be charged for any damage caused by the animal beyond reasonable wear and tear to the same extent that other students are charged for damages.
10. The student must ensure that their animal is treated humanely at all times and receives food, water, cleanliness, adequate exercise, etc. Should any evidence of neglect, mistreatment, or abuse be discovered, the College may contact animal control for immediate removal of the animal.
11. An assistance animal may not be left unattended overnight or for extended periods. Animals, including assistance animals except for service animals, are generally not permitted on college-sponsored trips. Students should make appropriate arrangements and communicate those arrangements with Residence Life staff before departure.
12. Should an animal no longer reside in Student Housing, the student is asked to notify Disability Services as well as Housing of this fact.
13. If it is necessary to replace an approved animal, the student must contact Disability Services prior to bringing another animal into Student Housing.

## Exceptions

Georgetown College may require the student to remove the assistance animal from Student Housing when:

1. The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others.
2. The animal is out of control and the student does not take effective action to control it.
3. The animal is not housebroken.
4. The animal causes a disturbance and the student does not take corrective measures to control it.
5. The animal is unclean or unkempt.
6. The animal is neglected, mistreated, or abused.
7. The animal has caused substantial property damage to the property of others, including the College's property.
8. The presence of the animal results in a fundamental alteration of a College program.
9. The student does not comply with the student's responsibilities set forth above.

Depending on individual circumstances, the student may have up to 14 days to correct the situation or remove the animal from campus from the date that they have been notified by the College of the violation. In case the animal causes serious harm or poses a danger to the safety of others, the College may require immediate removal of the animal. The notification will be in writing to the student's Georgetown email address.

## Conflicting Disabilities

Conflicts between students with approved assistance animals and other students protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The needs of both parties will be considered in resolving the

issue. Any student negatively impacted by the presence of an assistance animal should contact Disability Services and provide supporting documentation of their disability. In severe situations of allergic, behavioral, or medical reactions, temporary or interim accommodations may be arranged while addressing the matter.

## Emergency situations

In the event of an emergency, Georgetown College staff will collaborate with the Georgetown Fire or Police departments and/or other emergency responders. Their protocol will be followed. The College is not responsible for the removal of an animal during evacuation or caring for an animal during or after an emergency.

Students with assistance animals are encouraged to develop an individual evacuation plan. In case of an emergency evacuation, the student should have a crate large enough that the animal can comfortably stay in for hours at a time. Students must have an alternate caretaker for the animal in case of an emergency (such as hospitalization). The caretaker will then resume responsibility and possession of the animal until the student returns to campus.

## appeals and Grievances

A student may file an appeal of any decision regarding assistance animals by following the Disability Services Appeals and Grievance Process as outlined on the [Disability Services webpage](#) and in the [Student Handbook](#).

## privacy

Information regarding disability is kept private and maintained in secure files. Disability Services may need to share limited information about the presence of the animal and/or the student's protected status as a person with a disability on a need-to-know basis with others directly impacted by the presence of the animal (e.g. potential and/or actual roommate(s), Residence Life staff, Campus Safety, Campus Maintenance). Such information shall not include details related to the student's disability.

## Acknowledgment

By the signature on the [Assistance Animal Policy Acknowledgment Form](#), found on the Disability Services webpage, the requesting student verifies that they have read, understand, and will abide by the requirements set forth in this document.

If they fail to meet these requirements, Georgetown College has the right to remove the Assistance Animal and rescind approval. The student will be nonetheless required to fulfill their housing, academic, and all other obligations for the remainder of the housing contract.

The student acknowledges that they assume full responsibility, financial and otherwise, for the actions of their assistance animal.

A student requesting an assistance animal in Student Housing will hold Georgetown College harmless from any liability for disclosing limited information about the request or presence of an assistance animal to others.