

## Policy Regarding Service and Emotional Support Animal in College Housing

Westminster College understands the importance of Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals as reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities. Therefore, Westminster has established the following Policy regarding requests for Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals in College-owned housing. This Policy outlines :1) the applicable definitions, 2) the procedure for evaluating accommodation requests with respect to Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals in College housing, 3) the Owner's responsibilities, and 4) the standards for maintaining Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals at Westminster College. Westminster College reserves the right to amend this Policy as may be necessary. The Committee will give a recommendation of approval to the Vice President/Dean of Student Life who then give the final verdict of approval or denial. **All Service Animal and Emotional Support Animal applications must be renewed annually.**

### Section I. Definitions

- A. **Service Animal:** 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, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, do not qualify as Service Animals. The work or tasks performed by the service animal must be related directly to the individuals' disability. Examples of such work or tasks, but not limited to, include assisting those who are blind or with low vision, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, pulling a wheelchair, assisting if an individual is having a seizure, assisting in alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, getting items such as medicine or telephone, provide physical support/assistance with balance to individuals with mobility issues, assist individuals with psychiatric and neurological disabilities. 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 or miniature horses whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as Service Animals.

Service Animals must be harnessed, leashed or tethered unless these devices interfere with the Service Animal work/tasks or the individual's disability. In such cases, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other means.

- B. **Emotional Support Animal:** Emotional Support Animals are animals that work, provide assistance, or perform tasks for the benefit of individuals with a disability, or animals that provide emotional support, which alleviates one, or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. Some, but not all, animals that assist persons with disabilities are professionally trained. Other Emotional Support Animals are trained by the Owners. In some cases, no special training is required. The question is whether the animal performs the assistance or provides the benefit needed as a reasonable accommodation by the person with the disability. Unlike a Service Animal, an Emotional Support 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. Emotional Support Animals may be considered for access to College-owned/managed

housing; however, they are not permitted in other areas of the College (e.g. dining hall, libraries, academic buildings, classrooms, labs, student center, etc.).

- C. **Pet:** A domestic or tame animal kept for companionship. A pet is not considered a Service Animal or an Emotional Support Animal. Residents of Westminster College are not permitted to keep any type of pet.
- D. **Approved Animal:** A Service Animal or Emotional Support Animal that has been approved by Westminster College in accordance with this Policy.
- E. **Owner:** Is the student or other covered person who has requested the accommodation of a Service Animal or Emotional Support Animal and has been approved for the accommodation.

## **Section II. Procedures for Requesting Service Animals or Emotional Support Animals as a Reasonable Accommodation**

- A. Any individual requesting, as a reasonable accommodating, permission to allow a Service Animal or Emotional Support Animal must submit the "[Request Form for Service Animal and Emotional Support Animal Accommodations](#)" to the Executive Assistant to the Vice President/Dean of Student Life in the Office of the Dean of Student Life. This Request Form is available by request from the Office of Student Life or through the link [here](#).
- B. If an individual requires assistance in completing the Request Form, please contact the Executive Assistant to the Dean of Student Life.
- C. Westminster College may also require additional documentation indicating that the individual has a disability and that the animal would provide emotional support or other assistance that would ameliorate one or more symptoms or effects of the disability. Westminster may require that a reliable third party provide the required documentation. A "reliable third party" includes an external physician, psychiatrist, social worker, or other mental health professional. The documentation must be obtained by the individual or someone acting on behalf of the individual, and **NOT** by Westminster College Wellness Center staff. Documentation for the need of a Service Animal or Emotional Support Animal as a reasonable accommodation should include the following information:
  - 1. Verification of the individual's disability from an external physician, psychiatrist, social worker, or other mental health professional;
  - 2. A statement regarding how the animal serves as an accommodation for the verified disability; and, if necessary;
  - 3. A statement regarding how the animal provides the individual an equal opportunity to use an enjoy Westminster housing.
  - 4. Statement from a licensed Veterinarian regarding the animal's vaccination status and temperament.
  - 5. Verification, i.e cat or dog, is hypo-allergenic if deemed necessary by the committee due to housing accommodations and places of frequency by the animal.
  - 6. Verification of Pet-Owners insurance will be required

- D. Westminster, in consultation with the individual and other parties, as appropriate, may consider the criteria below in determining whether the presence of the animal is a reasonable accommodation to allow the individual access to College housing:
- Whether the animal poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the individual or others;
  - Whether the animal causes or has caused excessive damage to housing beyond reasonable wear and tear;
  - Whether the size of the animal is too large for available assigned housing space;
  - Whether the animal's presence would force another individual from individual housing (e.g. serious allergies);
  - Whether the animal's presence otherwise violates individuals' right to peace and quiet enjoyment; and
  - Whether the animal is housebroken or is unable to live with others in a reasonable manner.
- E. Westminster will make a prompt decision regarding the individual's request. Westminster will review the Request Form and all other documentation provided by the individual in reaching its determination regarding the request. In the event Westminster needs additional information to make a determination, Westminster will promptly advise the individual of the information needed. It is Westminster's practice to seek only the information necessary to verify whether the individual is a person with a disability and/or to evaluate if the reasonable accommodation is necessary to provide the individual an equal opportunity to use and enjoy Westminster housing. If Westminster grants the request, the individual will be so notified.
- F. Westminster may deny the requested accommodation if providing it would impose an undue financial burden and administrative burden on Westminster or fundamentally alter the nature of Westminster's operations. If Westminster denies the request, Westminster will communicate to the individual the reasons for the denial. If Westminster believes that the requested accommodation poses an undue financial and administrative burden or a fundamental alteration to the nature of Westminster's operations, Westminster will schedule a meeting with the individual at a mutually convenient time to discuss possible alternative accommodations that would not impose such a burden or result in a fundamental alteration.

The following timelines for requesting housing accommodations apply:

- First-year students:
  - June 1 of the same calendar year for fall semester
  - December 1 immediately prior to the spring semester
- All other Requests:
  - February 10 immediately prior to the start of campus room selection

Request Forms and other documentation submitted for housing accommodations after these dates will be accepted and considered; however, Westminster College cannot guarantee it will be able to meet an individual's request for an accommodation after these timelines, as it may impose an undue financial and/or administrative burden or fundamentally alter the nature of Westminster's operations.

- G. If an accommodation request is not granted, the student may appeal the decision. All appeals will go through the Vice President/Dean of Student Life and a response will be provided.
- H. If a student is approved for an accommodation pursuant to this Policy, the individual must provide written consent for Westminster to disclose information regarding the request to those individuals who may be impacted by the presence of the animal, including, but not limited to, Campus Life and Security staff. If necessary, the student's potential and/or actual roommate(s) and/or suitemate(s) and/or neighbors will be also be notified. Such information shall be limited to information related to the animal and shall not include information related to the individuals' disability. Any roommate(s) and/or suitemate(s) will sign the "College-Owned/Managed Roommate/Suitemate Acknowledgement" provided within this policy.

### **Section III. Owner's Responsibilities**

- A. Only Approved Animals will be permitted in Westminster College housing. The Owner must also abide by current city, county, and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to licensing, vaccination, and other requirements for animals. It is the Owner's responsibility to know and understand these ordinances, laws, and regulations. Westminster has the right to require documentation of compliance with such ordinances, laws, and/or regulations, which may include a vaccination certificate. Westminster reserves the right to request documentation showing that the animal has been licensed.
- B. The Owner is responsible for assuring the Approved Animal does not interfere with routine activities of the residence or cause difficulties for others residing in the residence.
- C. The Owner is financially responsible for the Approved Animal to include property damage and bodily injury caused by the animal. Examples: replacement of furniture, carpet, window(s), walls and wall coverings, etc. The Owner is expected to cover any cost associated with the damage or injury.
- D. The Owner is responsible for any cost relating to cleaning or repairs beyond standard cleaning or repairs.
- E. Animals must be placed in cage or locked shelter when owner is away from the room.
- F. If the animal is no longer needed as an Approved Animal or the animal is no longer in the residence, the Owner must notify the Office of Student Life. If the Owner wishes to replace the Approved Animal with a different animal, the Owner must submit a new request.
- G. If applicable, the Owner's College-owned/managed residence may be inspected for fleas, ticks, or other pests once a semester or as needed. If any pests are found, the residence will be treated and the Owner will be billed for the expense that is beyond standard pest management in residence halls.
- H. If the Owner resides in a shared living space, all roommates and/or suitemates must agree to allow the Approved Animal to reside with them (the College-Owned/Managed Roommate/Suitemate Acknowledgement provided in this policy). In the event one or more roommates or suitemates do not approve, either the Owner and the Approved Animal or the roommate(s)/suitemate(s) may be moved to a different residence.
- I. Service Animals may travel freely with their Owner throughout College Housing and other areas of the College as long as they are under the control of the Owner. Emotional Support Animals that do not otherwise qualify as Service Animals must be kept in the Owner's assigned room at all times if housed on campus, 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 Emotional Support Animal shall carry proof that the animal is an Approved Animal. 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 Westminster housing.

- J. Approved Animals may not be left overnight in College Housing to be cared for by another student. Approved Animals must be taken with the Owner if they leave campus for a prolonged period.
- K. Housing has the ability to relocate the Owner and the Approved Animal as deemed appropriate and in compliance with this Policy.
- L. The Owner is expected to comply with all other residential policies.
- M. If the owner lives in a fraternity house or sorority floor, they must obtain the signature/approval of their chapter president and chapter advisor.
- N. Any violation of the above requirements may result in immediate removal of the Approved Animal from the College.
- O. 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.

#### **Section VI. Standards for Maintaining an Approved Animal at Westminster College**

- A. Care and Supervision:
  - a. All care and supervision of Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals is the responsibility of the animal's Owner.
  - b. The Owner is required to maintain control of their animal at all times. For dogs, there will be an approved area to walk dogs on campus.
  - c. The Owner is responsible for the cleanup of the animal's waste. Indoor animal waste, such as a litter box must be placed in a tied sturdy plastic bag and disposed of in the outside trash dumpster. All litter boxes must be placed on mats so waste is not tracked.
  - d. The College may prohibit the use of Service Animals in certain locations because of the health and safety restrictions (e.g. where the animals may be in danger). Restricted areas may include, but are not limited to, the following areas: custodial closets, boiler rooms, facility equipment rooms, etc. Exceptions to restricted areas may be granted on a case-by-case basis by contacting the Executive Assistant to the Vice President/Dean of Student Life in the Office of the Dean of Student Life.
  - e. All Emotional Support Animals are restricted to the Owner's assigned housing.
- B. Animal Health and Well-Being
  - a. Vaccination: All animals must have current vaccinations against diseases common to that type of animal in accordance with local ordinances and regulations. Dogs must have current vaccination for rabies and wear a rabies vaccination tag.
  - b. Licensing: Local licensing requirements must be followed.
  - c. Health: All animals housed in College housing 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 College reserves the right to direct that the animal receives veterinary attention.

- d. Leash: The animal must be on a leash, unless the leash would inhibit the animal's ability to be of service.
  - e. Other Conditions: Other reasonable conditions or restrictions may be placed on the animal depending on the nature and characteristics of the animal.
- C. Responsibilities for Faculty, Staff, Students and Other Members of the Westminster Community
- a. They will allow a Service Animal to accompany its Owner at all times and in all places on campus, except where animals are specifically prohibited.
  - b. They are not to touch or pet a Service or Emotional Support Animal unless invited to do so.
  - c. They are not to feed a Service or Emotional Support Animal.
  - d. They are not to deliberately startle a Service or Emotional Support Animal.
  - e. They are not to separate or to attempt to separate an Owner from his or her Service or Emotional Support Animal.
  - f. Except as otherwise provided in this Policy/permitted under state or federal law, faculty, staff, students, and other members of the Westminster Community are not to inquire for details about the Owner's disabilities. The nature of a person's disability is a private matter.

By signing below, I verify that I have read, understand and will abide by the Guidelines outlined here and I agree to provide any additional information required to complete my Request for a Reasonable Accommodation under the College's Policy Regarding Service and Emotional Support Animal on College Housing.

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Resident Owner Signature

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Date

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Office of Human Resources

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Date

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Campus Life Representative

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Date



**Approved Animal Registration Form**

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

Owner's Residence (College):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Address (Home):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

**Alternate Caregiver for Animal If Owner is Unavailable:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach the Veterinarian's verification that the animal has all Veterinary-recommended vaccinations to maintain the animal's health and prevent contagious disease.