



## SUPPORT ANIMAL GUIDELINES 2023-2024

### I. UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES STATEMENT

The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown recognizes the importance of Support Animals (SA) to individuals with a documented disability and is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities and to fulfilling its responsibilities under federal and state laws and regulations. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide rules regarding individuals bringing animals onto University property, including University housing.

### II. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to these guidelines.

- a. **Emotional Support Animal:** An Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is a type of Support Animal. An ESA provides emotional support and comfort to individuals with psychiatric disabilities or other mental impairments.
- b. **Handler:** A handler is an individual who brings an animal onto University property.
- c. **Pet:** A pet is a companion animal that does not meet the definition of Service Animal or Support animal. Pets are not permitted on University property.
- d. **Service Animal:** Service Animals are dogs and, in some cases, miniature horses that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. These tasks can include things like pulling a wheelchair, guiding a person who is visually impaired, or alerting a person who is having a seizure. The tasks a service dog can perform are not limited to this list. However, the work or task a Service Animal does must directly relate to the person's disability. Service animals may accompany persons with disabilities into places that the public normally goes.
- e. **Support Animal:** A Support Animal (SA) is an assistance animal, other than a Service Animal, that does work, performs tasks, provides assistance, and/or provides therapeutic emotional support for individuals with disabilities. An Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is a type of Support Animal. A Support Animal, including an ESA, is typically a dog, cat, small bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, other rodent, fish, turtle, or other small, domesticated animal that is traditionally kept in the home for pleasure rather than for commercial purposes. Reptiles (other than turtles), barnyard animals, monkeys, kangaroos, and other non-domesticated animals are not considered common household animals and therefore cannot be approved as an SA.
- f. **University Property:** This term encompasses all property owned, controlled, and operated by the University for purposes of carrying out University operations.

### III. GUIDELINES

1. Student must register with the Office of Health and Counseling Services and submit a Housing Accommodation Request to bring the SA into on-campus housing. The request must include a direct link between the animal and the Handler's documented disability. Handler must personally meet with Office of Health and Counseling Services to discuss

- his/her individual request. If the request for Support Animal is approved, notification will be sent to all residents of the room/apartment where the SA will reside. If a roommate (or suite/lodge mate) does not agree to residing with an SA in his/her room, the roommate will be given a new housing assignment.
2. A request for an SA must include a letter of recommendation from the student's treating professional (i.e., psychiatrist or physician, or licensed mental health professional). This recommendation should be part of the treatment plan and indicate the benefit provided by the specific animal. The documentation must indicate a direct correlation between the diagnosis and the need for that support animal. The recommendation should also provide evidence of an existing and ongoing therapeutic relationship.
  3. The following animals are considered acceptable SAs:
    - a. A dog (**recommended** less than 40 pounds). The following must be submitted prior to bringing the animal to campus: 1) a current photograph of the animal and 2) proof of vaccinations for rabies, distemper, leptospirosis, Bordetella, and fecal OVA. Handler must provide evidence the SA is licensed and wears its identification tag with its license number, including registration, rabies tag, and handler's cell number always. Additionally, the handler must certify the animal is housebroken.
    - b. A domestic cat (**recommended** at least one year old). The following must be submitted prior to bringing the animal to campus: 1) a current photo of the animal and 2) proof of vaccinations for rabies and distemper, and fecal OVA. Handler must certify the animal is litter trained before bringing to campus.
    - c. A hamster
    - d. A guinea pig
    - e. A rabbit
    - f. If the animal is a dog, cat, small bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, other rodent, fish, turtle, or other small, domesticated animal that is traditionally kept in the home for pleasure rather than for commercial purposes, then the reasonable accommodation will be granted if the requestor has provided information confirming that there is a disability-related need for the animal. Reptiles (other than turtles), barnyard animals, monkeys, kangaroos, and other non-domesticated animals are not considered common household animals and therefore cannot be approved as an SA.
  4. In addition to the items mentioned in guidelines #3 the following must be provided prior to bringing the animal to campus (this applies to all SAs): 1) completed and signed Authorized Animal Responsibility Agreement, 2) clear, full-bodied picture of the animal, 3) completed and signed Authorized Handler Emergency Contact, and 4) completed and signed Resident Agreement for Support Animal (if applicable).
  5. Where the animal is of a type that can wear a collar, such animal shall wear a collar with basic identification information at all times.
  6. The handler must abide by current city, county, and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to licensing, vaccination, and other requirements for animals. The student must know and understand these ordinances, laws, and regulations. The University has the right to require reasonable documentation of compliance with such ordinances, laws, and/or regulations, which may include a vaccination certificate or a veterinarian's statement regarding the animal's health. The University reserves the right to make reasonable requests for documentation showing that the animal meets these requirements.
  7. A student is permitted to have only one SA on campus.
  8. Handler is responsible for the care and supervision of the SA and is required to always maintain control of the animal.

9. The Handler must communicate with Housing, Dining & Residence Life if the care and keeping of the SA becomes too great, or if the Handler removes the SA from campus housing.
10. SAs may have access to Handler's room only and are not permitted in common areas of the apartment, lodge, residence hall or other areas of the University (e.g., other students' rooms or apartments, patios, library, academic buildings, classrooms, labs, Student Union, etc.). SAs are not permitted to travel in any University vehicles or shuttles. except to the extent the student is taking the animal out for natural relief. When a Support Animal is outside of the student's private living accommodation, the animal must be either controlled by a leash or harness or contained in an animal carrier.
11. SAs may not be left overnight in University Housing to be cared for by any individual other than the Handler. If the Handler is to be absent from his/her residence hall overnight or longer, the animal must accompany the Handler or be picked up by the emergency contact.
12. The Handler is responsible for ensuring that the SA is contained, as appropriate, when the Handler is not present during the day while attending classes or other activities.
13. In the event of an emergency, the university is **not** responsible for obtaining the animal from the residence. The name and contact information must be provided for an emergency contact who can retrieve the animal from campus in the event it must be removed. This individual must reside within a two-hour proximity to campus.
14. The student is required to immediately clean up after and properly dispose of the animal's feces in a safe and sanitary manner. If the animal is a dog, the dog must be housebroken and kennel trained.
15. The student is financially responsible for any and all costs associated with the care, maintenance and removal of the animal. This includes any costs of damage to University property caused by the animal, including but not limited to cleaning and repairs beyond reasonable wear and tear, and pest control. The University shall have the right to bill the Handler's account for unmet obligations under this provision.
16. The University is not responsible or liable, in any manner, for SAs.
17. The Handler is responsible for removal of the animal in the event of an evacuation.
18. The Handler's room will be subject to unannounced monthly health and safety inspections to ensure it is sanitary and that the health and wellness of all occupants, including the animal, are well maintained.
19. The handler is responsible for maintaining control over the animal's behavior (for example, excessive barking or other similar behavior, urinating/defecating on floors or walls, or roaming the hallways, etc.). Violation of this or any responsibility contained in this document will result in a written warning. More than one written warning in an academic calendar year may result in removal of the animal from campus and/or disciplinary action against the student in accordance with other University policies.
- ~~20.~~ Any threat posed to a member of the campus community by an SA will not be tolerated. If any aggressive or disruptive behavior is exhibited by the SA, the Handler will be responsible for the SAs immediate removal from campus
21. All complaints about an SA will be investigated by the Office of Housing, Dining & Residence Life in conjunction with Student Conduct and Campus Police.
22. In the event of a medical emergency, including, but not limited to the death of the animal while on campus, a local veterinarian or animal hospital must be contacted. In the case of an animal loss, due to death or simply choosing to not have the animal on campus, the Office of Housing, Dining & Residence Life must be notified immediately. No deceased

- animal is permitted to be buried anywhere on campus grounds and must be removed from campus immediately.
23. Students found to be falsely characterizing their animal as a Service Animal or Support Animal may be subject to discipline in accordance with other applicable University policies.
  24. The University reserves the right to revoke SA privileges if it is deemed the animal is being neglected or abused.

**Please note: Returning students who have had an SA in the past must reapply each year. Permission for an SA is not automatically carried over from prior years.**

If the University directs the animal be removed from campus, the Handler is expected to fulfill his/her housing obligations for the remainder of the housing contract.