

## GUIDANCE FOR ASSISTANCE ANIMAL REQUESTS

The Mary Baldwin University (“MBU” or “University”) recognizes the importance of “Service Animals” as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) and the broader category of “Assistance Animals” under the Fair Housing Act that provide physical and/or emotional support to individuals with disabilities. MBU is committed to allowing individuals with disabilities the use of a Service Animal on campus to facilitate their full-participation and equal access to the University’s programs and activities. MBU is also committed to allowing Assistance Animals necessary to provide individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy University housing. These Guidelines explain the specific requirements applicable to an individual’s use of an Assistance Animal in University housing. MBU reserves the right to amend the Guidelines as circumstances require. The Guidelines apply solely to “Assistance Animals” which may be requested in University housing. They do not apply to “Service Animals” as defined by the ADAAA.

Although it is the policy of MBU that individuals are generally prohibited from having animals in University housing, MBU will consider a request by an individual with a disability for reasonable accommodation from this prohibition to allow an Assistance Animal that is necessary because of a disability and reasonable. However, no Assistance Animal may be kept in University housing at any time prior to the individual receiving approval as a reasonable accommodation pursuant to the Guidelines.

### **I. Definitions**

#### **A. Assistance Animal**

“Assistance Animals” are a category of animals that may work, provide assistance, or perform physical tasks, for an individual with a disability and/or provide necessary emotional support to an individual with a mental or psychiatric disability that alleviates one or more identified symptoms of an individual’s disability, but which are not considered Service Animals under the

ADAAA and MBU's Service Animal Policy. Some Assistance Animals are professionally trained, but in other cases Assistance Animals provide the necessary support to individuals with disabilities without any formal training or certification. Dogs are commonly used as assistance animals, but any animal may serve a person with a disability as an Assistance Animal.<sup>[1]</sup>

The question in determining if an Assistance Animal will be allowed in University housing is whether or not the Assistance Animal is necessary because of the individual's disability to afford the individual an equal opportunity to use and enjoy University housing and its presence in University housing is reasonable. However, even if the individual with a disability establishes necessity for an Assistance Animal and it is allowed in University housing, an Assistance Animal is not permitted in other areas of the University (e.g. dining facilities, libraries, academic buildings, athletic building and facilities, classrooms, labs, individual centers, etc.).

### **B. Owner**

The "Owner" is the individual who has requested the accommodation and has received approval to bring an Assistance Animal into University Housing.

### **C. Accessibility Services Office**

The Accessibility Services Office collaborates with individuals, faculty, and staff to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to all MBU programs and activities.

## **II. Guidelines For Requesting Assistance Animals in University Housing**

The guidelines for requesting Assistance Animals follow those set forth herein. The request for an assistance animal **must be made 45 days in advance** of bringing the animal to campus, to allow a thorough review; an animal that is brought to campus without advance approval will not be allowed into a hall regardless of the circumstances. Requests must be submitted yearly.

[1] It is important to note that animals that may be needed because of a disability may be identified by various names. For example, an individual may identify the animal as a companion animal, therapy animal, or emotional support animal.

**Process- Owners will be required to submit the following form 45 days prior to requested date of animal arrival. No requests will be considered until all the below documentation is received and is complete.**

## **ASSISTANCE ANIMAL REQUEST FORM:**

[https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?MaryBaldwin&layout\\_id=19](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?MaryBaldwin&layout_id=19)

**You will be able to upload all the required documentation to this form**

1. Documentation from a licensed mental health professional (i.e., psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker) who has provided treatment to the individual requesting and must include ALL of the following:
  - a. Evidence of the disability and the DSM diagnos(i/e)s related to the use of an emotional support animal
  - b. The dates of treatment and the date at which the diagnosis was first made
  - c. The symptom(s) for which treatment was prescribed
  - d. Treatment(s) other than use of an emotional support animal that have been used for symptom reduction
  - e. The date on which the use of an emotional support animal was prescribed
  - f. Prognosis with and without the emotional support animal
  - g. On-going treatment for the condition by a licensed professional.

*NOTE: There must be an affirmative connection between the diagnosis/symptoms and the use of the support animal. In cases where it is unclear of the therapeutic benefit additional documentation or assessment may be required.*

2. If applicable, all current documentation of the animal's health records (immunizations, vaccinations, etc.) from a veterinarian.
3. The veterinarian must also provide verification via letter of support that the animal is appropriate for the University residential community and environment.
4. Dog specific requirements:
  - a. Proof of liability insurance on a canine as designated through a parent/guardian's homeowner's insurance policy, personal renters insurance, or canine liability insurance.
  - b. Proof animal is at least 9 months of age.
  - c. Submit proof of licensure with the City of Staunton.
5. A physical description of the animal including height and weight and confirmation that the animal is housebroken or confined such that housebreaking is not necessary (e.g., hamster in a cage). Include any

equipment that will be needed for the care of the animal and the care plan for the assistance animal to maintain health and wellbeing.

6. A photo of the animal
7. Appointment of a designee, including contact information, who will gather and remove the Assistance Animal from University Housing in cases of emergency.

### **III. Criteria for Determining If Presence of the Assistance Animal is Reasonable**

A. University housing is unique in several aspects including the mandatory assignment of roommates for many individuals and the mandate that individuals must share a room or suite in certain residence halls. To ensure that the presence of assistance animals is not an undue administrative burden or causes a fundamental alteration of University housing, MBU reserves the right to assign an individual with an assistance animal to a single room without a roommate.

B. However, for all requests for assistance animals, the Office of Student Life shall nonetheless consult with Accessibility Services in making a determination on a case-by-case basis of whether the presence of an assistance animal is reasonable. A request for an assistance animal may be denied as unreasonable if the presence of the animal: (1) imposes an undue financial and/or administrative burden on the University; (2) fundamentally alters University housing policies; and/or (3) poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others or would cause substantial property damage to the property of others, including University property.

C. MBU may consider the following factors, among others, as evidence in determining whether the presence of the animal is reasonable or in the making of housing assignments for individuals with Assistance Animals:

1. The size of the animal is too large for available assigned housing space;
2. The animal's presence would force another individual from individual housing (e.g. serious allergies);
3. The animal's presence otherwise violates individuals' right to peace and quiet enjoyment;
4. The animal is not housebroken or is unable to live with others in a reasonable manner;

5. The animal's vaccinations are not up-to-date;
6. The animal poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the individual or others such as aggressive behavior towards or injuring the individual or others; or
7. The animal causes or has caused excessive damage to housing beyond reasonable wear and tear.

MBU will not limit room assignments for individuals with Assistance Animals to any particular building or buildings because the individual needs an Assistance Animal because of a disability.

#### **IV. Access to University Facilities By Assistance Animals**

##### **A. Assistance Animals**

An Assistance Animal must be contained within the privately assigned individual living accommodations (e.g., room, suite, apartment) except to the extent the individual is taking the animal out for natural relief. When an Assistance Animal is outside the private individual living accommodations, it must be in an animal carrier or controlled by a leash or harness. Assistance Animals are NOT allowed in any University facilities other than University residence halls (e.g. dormitories, suites, apartments, etc.) to which the individual is assigned.

##### **B. Dominion and Control**

All Assistance Animals are restricted to the Owners room except as it is necessary for natural relief.

Notwithstanding the restrictions set forth herein, the Assistance Animal must be properly housed and restrained or otherwise under the dominion and control of the Owner at all times. 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 University housing.

#### **V. Individual's Responsibilities for Assistance Animal**

If the University grants an individual's request to live with an Assistance Animal, the individual is solely responsible for the custody and care of the Assistance Animal and must meet the following requirements:

## General Responsibilities of Owner

1. The Owner must abide by current city, county, and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to licensing, vaccination, and other requirements for animals. It is the individual's responsibility to know and understand these ordinances, laws, and regulations. The University has the right to require documentation of compliance with such ordinances, laws, and/or regulations, which may include a vaccination certificate. The University reserves the right to request documentation showing that the animal has been licensed.
2. The Owner is required to clean up after and properly dispose of the animal's waste in a safe and sanitary manner and, when provided, must use animal relief areas designated by MBU.
3. The Owner is required to ensure the animal is well cared for at all times. Any evidence of mistreatment or abuse may result in immediate removal of the Assistance Animal and/or discipline for the individual. The Owner will maintain the quality of life and well-being of the Assistance Animal.
4. MBU will not ask for or require an individual with a disability to pay a fee or surcharge for an approved Assistance Animal.
5. An individual with a disability may be charged for any damage caused by their Assistance Animal beyond reasonable wear and tear to the same extent that it charges other individuals for damages beyond reasonable wear and tear. The Owner's living accommodations may also be inspected for fleas, ticks or other pests if necessary as part of the University's standard or routine inspections. 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. The university shall have the right to bill the individual's account for unmet obligations under this provision.
6. The Owner must fully cooperate with University personnel with regard to meeting the terms of these Guidelines and developing procedures for care of the animal (e.g., cleaning the animal, feeding/watering the animal, designating an outdoor relief area, disposing of feces, etc.).
7. Assistance Animals may not be left overnight in University Housing to be cared for by any individual other than the Owner. If the Owner is to be absent from their residence hall overnight or longer, the animal must accompany the

Owner. If, in cases of emergency, the animal can not accompany the Owner, the appointed designee will be contacted with a request to remove the animal from University Housing.

8. The Owner is responsible for ensuring that the Assistance Animal is contained within a crate, cage, pen, or aquarium when the Owner is not present during the day while attending classes or other activities.
9. The Owner agrees to abide by all equally applicable residential policies that are unrelated to the individual's disability such as assuring that the animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the residence or cause difficulties for individuals who reside there.
10. The animal is allowed in university housing only as long as it is necessary because of the Owner's disability. The Owner must notify the Student Life Office in writing if the Assistance Animal is no longer needed or is no longer in residence. To replace an Assistance Animal, the new animal must be necessary because of the Owner's disability and the Owner must follow the procedures in these Guidelines when requesting a different animal.
11. MBU personnel shall *not* be required to provide care or food for any Assistance Animal including, but not limited to, removing the animal during emergency evacuation for events such as a fire alarm. Emergency personnel will determine whether to remove the animal and may not be held responsible for the care, damage to, or loss of the animal.
12. The individual must provide written consent for Accessibility Services to disclose information regarding the request for and presence of the Assistance Animal to those individuals who may be impacted by the presence of the animal including, but not limited to, Student and Residence Life personnel and potential and/or actual roommate(s)/neighbor(s). Such information shall be limited to information related to the animal and shall not include information related to the individual's disability.

## **VI. Removal of Assistance Animal**

The University may require the individual to remove the animal from University housing if:

1. the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others or causes substantial property damage to the property of others;

2. the animal's presence results in a fundamental alteration of a University program;
3. the Owner does not comply with the Owner's Responsibilities set forth above;  
or
4. the animal or its presence creates an unmanageable disturbance or interference with the university community.

The University will base such determinations upon the consideration of the behavior of the particular animal at issue, and not on speculation or fear about the harm or damages an animal may cause. Any removal of the animal will be done in consultation with the Office of Student Life. Should the Assistance Animal be removed from the premises for any reason, the Owner is expected to fulfill their housing obligations for the remainder of the housing contract. If the animal is removed, the Owner must re-apply for an Assistance Animal and will be asked to address the reasons for removal.

#### **VII. Non-retaliation Provision**

MBU will not retaliate against any person because that individual has requested or received a reasonable accommodation in University housing, including a request for an Assistance Animal.

By my signature below, I verify that I have read, understand and will abide by the requirements outlined here and I agree to provide the additional information required to complete my request under the University's Assistance Animal Guidelines for University Housing.

## Acknowledgement and Release of Information Consent Form

I have read and understand the Guidance for Assistance Animal Requests and I agree to abide by the requirements applicable to Assistance Animals. I understand that if I fail to meet the requirements set forth in the Guidelines, MBU has the right to remove the Assistance Animal and I will be nonetheless required to fulfill my housing, academic, and all other obligations for the remainder of the housing contract.

I furthermore give permission to the Accessibility Services Office to disclose to others impacted by the presence of my Assistance Animal (e.g., Student Life staff, potential and/or actual roommate(s)/neighbor(s)) that I will be living with an animal as an accommodation. I understand that this information will be shared with the intent of preparing for the presence of the Assistance Animal and/or resolving any potential issues associated with the presence of the Assistance animal.

I further recognize that the presence of the Assistance Animal may be noticed by others visiting or residing in University Housing and agree that staff may acknowledge the presence of the animal, and explain that under certain circumstances Assistance Animals are permitted for persons with disabilities.

_____	_____
Individual Signature	Date
_____	_____
Accessibility Services Representative	Date
_____	_____
Student Life Representative	Date

08/2018