

University of Central Florida
Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Programs
Assistive Animals as a Reasonable Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities

The University of Central Florida (UCF) maintains a no-pets policy on campus and in its on-campus residence halls. There are several exceptions to that policy, consistent with federal law and state statute:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) provides guidelines regarding use of service animals in areas with no-pets policies
- Florida Statute [413.08](#) defines service animals and the rights of individuals to bring them to areas with no-pet policies
- University Policy [3-400](#), Non-Research Animals on Campus, defines “service animals.” It specifies the circumstances in which service animals are permitted on campus. Consistent with this policy, assistive animals performing therapy and companion services may be considered as service animals for approval as accommodations to a disability.

The primary consideration is to ensure a safe and healthy environment for the university community. The ADA and university policy allow service animals assisting persons with disabilities to be present on campus. A service animal is permitted by Florida statute to accompany a person with a disability to most locations on campus, except for research laboratories and areas where there is danger to the service animal.

Examples of tasks that service animals are trained to perform, under the university policy:

- Guiding a person who is visually impaired or blind
- Alerting a person who is hearing impaired or deaf
- Pulling a wheelchair user
- Alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure
- Performing other special tasks

The University Police Department is responsible for maintaining compliance with this university policy. Individuals using service animals may be asked to provide information regarding the service animal’s function and/or training.

Requests regarding animals which provide accommodations to persons with disabilities are reviewed following the university’s accommodation procedure. This would include animals performing special tasks as therapy or companion animals, as defined below.

Definitions and Examples

The campus is understood to include the facilities and grounds comprising the University of Central Florida.

Service animals as defined by statute and reference in federal law are not pets and are not subject to campus rules and policies pertaining to pets. The university may review the activities of any animal present on campus to ensure that it meets the statutory definitions.

Service animals as defined by statute are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability (ref. ADA Title III, 28 CFR Sec 36.104).

Therapy animals normally visit people with disabilities as a therapy tool or an integral part of a treatment process. They do not assist individuals with a disability to perform the activities of daily living. Therapy animals are not covered by statutes protecting and giving rights to service animals. Approval of the presence of a therapy animal falls within the authority of the university regarding accommodations to a disability.

Therapy animals are defined as animals with a good temperament and reliable, predictable behavior. Therapy animals used as an accommodation normally will be permitted within campus housing areas for their periodic visits. This is in addition to other areas where university programs are offered, as identified by the requestor.

Companion animals are documented by a qualified professional as necessary for the person with a disability to participate in one or more university programs. Approval of the presence of a companion animal falls within the authority of the university regarding accommodations to a disability.

Trainee animals are under instruction to become a service animal. A trainee will be under control of the handler, who may not be the assigned handler when the animal completes its training. Until the animal completes its training to become a service animal, its statutory protections are limited.

Consideration of the request for a trainee animal will be based on such factors as whether the trainee is housebroken and fully socialized. To be fully socialized means the animal will rarely make disruptive noises and will have a good temperament. If approved for presence on campus, the handler will be expected to immediately correct any misbehavior by the animal or remove it from campus.

Pets are animals kept for pleasure or companionship, exclusive of accommodation documentation from a qualified provider. Pets are not permitted on campus or in university facilities.

Handlers/partners are individuals using a service [including trainee], therapy, or companion animal. "Using" may describe a student with a disability benefitting from the animal whose presence was approved by the university, or a person training a service animal.

Further information

A department receiving a request to approve the presence of an animal as an accommodation will solicit recommendations from qualified professionals in pertinent fields as needed. Those professionals may have backgrounds in such areas as disability accommodations, housing, animal care and control, or counseling. They may be from UCF offices such as Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Programs (EO/AA), Student Disability Services, Housing and Residence Life, Health Services, Counseling Services, or other campus and community resources.

Persons with disabilities using service, therapy, or companion animals as an accommodation are responsible for their animals at all times. Use of the animal may not constitute a direct threat to the health and safety of others. The handler/partner is responsible for the health of the animal, including the sanitary disposal of animal waste; any property damage caused by the animal; the behavior of the animal in private and/or public places; and due care and diligence in the use of the animal in areas of university programs.

The University reserves the right to enforce all relevant rules for the use of service, therapy, and companion animals through student conduct codes and applicable laws and policies. Individuals who have animals on campus without appropriate approval will be liable for the consequences. The University does not entertain retroactive requests for accommodation, including the use of service, therapy, and companion animals on campus.

Procedures for requesting an assistive animal as an accommodation

Persons with disabilities complete the [Request for Reasonable Accommodation form](#) or call (407) 823-1EEO (1336) to have a paper copy mailed. The requestor also must submit appropriate documentation to the UCF Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Programs describing how the animal mitigates or lessens the effects of the disability.

If the animal is a service animal, the trained behavior must be identified. If the animal is a therapy or companion animal, a letter from a psychiatrist, licensed psychologist, or qualified diagnostician that includes the following is required:

1. A description of the functional limitation(s) caused by the disability
2. Clear explanation as to how the animal mitigates or lessens the effects of the disability

Once these requirements for documentation have been met, the university will review the request. Consultation with appropriate offices will follow. [Students must register with the Student Disability Services (SDS) office and provide the appropriate documentation for the disability in order to engage in this process. See [Documentation Requirements](#).

Example of consultation: a student's request for accommodation in a program under Housing and Residence Life will likely be considered by that department as well as the department responsible for cleaning the residence unit.

The request for accommodation will be approved or declined with notification to the requestor. An approved accommodation regarding an animal is confidential, like any other accommodation. Since it is an exception to the university rule generally prohibiting non-research animals on campus, a letter of documentation will be issued to persons whose accommodation requests are approved.

The letter will not disclose confidential information. It will document that the individual is authorized to have the animal described within the letter on campus or for a specified university program. If a different animal is utilized at a later date, the individual is required to document the new animal's training and ability.

For additional information, please contact:

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UCF EO/AA 10/08, 7/10