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## Disability Support Resources (DSR) Guidelines for Assistance Animals

**Grand Valley State University (GVSU)** provides reasonable accommodations to housing residents with a documented disability. We collaborate with Housing and Residence Life for modifications to housing assignments. The policy governs the use of service animals and assistance animals in university housing.

### I. Definitions

#### A. Service Animal

The university recognizes “service animals” as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA). Pursuant to the ADAA, a service animal is defined as any dog or miniature horse that is 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.

Service animals are not required to register with DSR unless the resident requires housing.

In situations where it is not obvious that the dog is a service animal, staff may ask only two specific questions:

- 1). Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- 2). What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

Staff are not allowed to request any documentation for the dog, require that the dog demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the person’s disability. Service animals are not required to wear a vest, ID tag, or specific harness.

Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, cannot be service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the handler's disability. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition.

#### B. Miniature Horse

GVSU shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use

### Assessment factors

In determining whether reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures

### C. Service Dogs in Training

1. Service dogs in training are permitted on campus in all public facilities on the same basis

### D. Assistance Animal

Recognized under the Fair Housing Act, an assistance animal is not a pet. It is an animal that 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 disability. Assistance animals do not need to be trained, certified or licensed by any entity or program. Any animal prescribed by a doctor or other medical professional to assist a person with a disability can be an assistance animal. Assistance Animals are not considered Service Animals under the ADAA and are not provided the same protections.

## II. Animals in Housing

### A. Service Animals in Housing

A resident who will utilize a service animal in housing is strongly encouraged but not required to identify and register with DSR. This will enable the university to appropriately plan for the animal's presence in housing and provide the resident with information about the full range of disability services provided by DSR. Students wishing to utilize a service dog in training in housing must first register with DSR and seek approval through the reasonable accommodation process, before bringing the animal to campus.

## B. Assistance Animals

### Guidelines for an Assistance Animal

1. A resident desiring the use of an assistance animal in university housing must identify and register with Disability Support Resources (DSR) in advance, (preferably at least 30 days) before housing for the animal is needed. Please note that students must petition for accommodation each academic year with DSR.
2. Students must notify DSR of the need for an assistance animal at a minimum of 30 days after receiving their housing assignment to ensure that roommate agreements and conflicting disabilities will not delay approval. Each request will be reviewed on an individualized basis.
3. It is the responsibility of the individual to provide appropriate documentation.
4. All assistance animals must have an annual clean bill of health from a Michigan licensed veterinarian, documented by vaccination certificate or written statement from veterinarian in the county of residence (Ottawa or Kent County) according to the State of Michigan requirements.
5. The university reserves the right to request documentation that the assistance animal is licensed and vaccinated and to have the animal examined by a licensed Michigan veterinarian of its choosing.
6. Assistance animals are limited to university housing. Assistance animals are not allowed in food service or food preparation areas on campus, nor are they permitted in classrooms or offices.
7. The resident receiving approval for an assistance animal will be expected to adhere to the same housing and student code policies as all other students. Students must receive a DSR issued "memo" as proper documentation of approval for an assistance animal. The animal must not arrive on campus without approval. Students without authorization may be fined up to \$250.00.
8. DSR may place other reasonable conditions or restrictions on animals depending on the characteristics and nature of the animal.
9. The owner is responsible for ensuring that all animals are contained in a crate or cage within their living center. This guideline includes all animals when the resident is not present including attending classes or other activities to prevent health, safety, or escape risks.
  - a. *The owner is responsible for ensuring that the assistance animal is contained, as appropriate, anytime the owner is not present in the room.*

### III. Approval Process

1. Documentation of a disability (see special note regarding documentation for service and assistance animals for details).
2. A signed letter, on professional letterhead, from the individual's health care provider stating:
  - The nature of the disabling condition or impairment; the animal is necessary to afford the person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling;
  - There is an identifiable relationship or nexus between the disability and the assistance the animal provides; and
  - The type of animal.

***The University reserves the right to request additional clarification or documentation.***

3. DSR will validate the need for approved accommodations and work with the individual and campus officials to facilitate a supportive network.
4. Once approved by DSR, the use of an assistance animal will be validated by a temporary DSR issued “memo” for documentation of request. Please note renewal each year is not automatic. Students must complete this approval process each academic year with DSR preferably by July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year planning to return.
5. Please allow up to one week for processing.

**IV. Requests to have an assistance animal in campus housing** are considered requests for accommodation and will be reviewed on an individualized basis. Individuals making requests must establish that they experience a documented disability and must also establish that the animal is indeed providing essential therapeutic benefit related to the documented disability. GVSU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to housing residents with a documented disability.

The Assistance Animal must be contained within the resident’s assigned living learning center, except to the extent the resident is taking the animal out for natural relief. When the Assistance Animal is outside the resident’s private living quarters, the animal must be in an animal carrier or controlled by a leash or harness. The Assistance Animal is not permitted in other areas of the University (e.g., other living learning centers or apartment buildings, dining facilities, academic buildings, athletic buildings and facilities, classrooms, labs, libraries, etc.)

#### **V. Owner requirements**

The owner of a Service Animal or Assistance Animal approved to live in University housing must abide by the following conditions:

- A. The owner must comply with state and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing and vaccination.
- B. The owner must clean up after and properly dispose of the animal’s waste in a safe and sanitary manner.
- C. The owner is financially responsible for any property damage caused by the animal beyond reasonable wear and tear.
- D. The animal must be properly housed, restrained, and under the owner’s control at all times. If an animal is found loose or unattended outside the owner’s private living quarters, the animal is subject to immediate removal from University housing.

#### **VI. Restricted Areas**

The university may restrict the use of service animals in certain locations due to health or safety

Exceptions to restricted areas may be granted on a case-by-case basis by contacting DSR. In making its

## **VII. Policy Exceptions**

- A. The request should be filed with:  
Disability Support Resources (DSR):  
4015 James H. Zumberge Hall  
1 Campus Dr.  
Allendale, MI 49401-9403  
Ofc: 616/331-2490  
TDD: 616/331-3270  
Fax: 616/331-3880  
[www.gvsu.edu/dsr](http://www.gvsu.edu/dsr)
- B. The individual will be required to show proof of residency in university housing to initiate the process.

## **VIII. Dispute Resolution Procedure**

Individuals wishing to request a modification or exception to this policy as a reasonable accommodation should contact the DSR.

Disputes or disagreements about a disability determination, appropriateness of an accommodation, service/assistance quality, or an animal restriction should first be raised with the DSR. If the matter cannot be resolved, a dispute resolution should be submitted to DSR.

Individuals may also file a written grievance with the university's ADA Coordinator for Grievances:

**ADA Coordinator for Grievances**

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#### VIII. Policy Implementation

DSR and university housing are responsible for implementing this policy. Success requires the cooperation of all students, staff and faculty.

***Grand Valley State University reserves the right to make exceptions to, modify or eliminate this policy and or its content. This document supersedes all previous policies, procedures or guidelines relative to this subject.***