



## **ADA & Rochester Christian University Accommodation Policy: Service Animals & Emotional Support Animals**

Updated March, 2024

**All requests for an assistive animal must be submitted via the [Assistive Animal Accommodation Form](#) to the Accommodation Officer. Accommodations will not be established before a student speaks with and submits appropriate documentation to the Accommodation Officer.**

### **Contact Information:**

Barby Knepper, Accommodation Officer

Email: [accommodations@rochesteru.edu](mailto:accommodations@rochesteru.edu)

Rochester Christian University, HL220

Phone: (248) 218-2137

### **Rochester Christian University Accommodation Policy Guidelines**

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 Rochester Christian University provides reasonable accommodation(s) to qualified students with disabilities.

Please review the *Rochester Christian University Students with Disability Services and Accommodation Policy* available on Rochester Christian University's website: [rcu.edu/academics/center-for-advising-vocation-services/student-support-services/](http://rcu.edu/academics/center-for-advising-vocation-services/student-support-services/)

### **Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals Policy**

Rochester Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in allowing use of service animals for students, employees, and visitors. Emotional Support Animals (ESA) are also addressed in this policy, but ESAs are not considered service animals under the ADA. An Emotional Support Animal is a type of assistance animal that is recognized as a "reasonable accommodation" for a person with a disability under the federal Fair Housing Act (FHAct, 42 U.S.C.A. 3601 et seq.). The assistance animal is not a pet according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

### **Definitions**

#### **Service Animals/Service animals in training**

The ADA defines a **Service Animal** as any dog (or in some cases a miniature horse) that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities, including a physical,

sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Tasks performed can include, among other things: pulling a wheelchair, retrieving dropped items, alerting a person to a sound, reminding a person to take medication, or pressing an elevator button. Other species of animals, whether trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or task performed by a service animal must be directly related to the person's disability.

Under the ADA, colleges and universities must allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into all areas of the facility that are open to the public or to students.

Service animals/in training are not required to be registered through the Accommodations Office to be in public areas on campus. A student seeking to have a service/assistance animal in University Housing must identify and register their animal with the Accommodations Office. Students with service animals are encouraged to register through the voluntary accommodations process.

In circumstances where it is not readily apparent what service the animal is providing; staff may ask the handler the following questions:

1. Is the animal a service animal assisting with a disability?
2. What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

### **Emotional Support Animal**

An **Emotional Support Animal (ESA)** is a type of assistance animal that provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. An Emotional Support Animal is not a pet or a service animal. These support animals provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. Emotional Support Animals (ESA), comfort animals, and therapy dogs are not service animals under Title II and Title III of the ADA. An emotional support animal is a type of assistance animal that is recognized as a "reasonable accommodation" for a person with a disability under the federal Fair Housing Act (FHAct, 42 U.S.C.A. 3601 et seq.).

The student is permitted to keep the animal at their residence and to have the animal accompany them to their campus jobs. Since these regulations only apply to housing facilities, the animals may not be allowed in other areas of campus (e.g., library, academic buildings, classrooms, labs, campus center, other residence halls, etc.), except on a case-by-case basis.

- **Only one ESA per student is allowed.**
- **Dogs must be at least one year old, and cats must be at least 6 months old.**

### **Expectations of Members of the Rochester Christian University Community**

To ensure equal access and nondiscrimination of people with disabilities, members of the Rochester Christian University community must adhere to the following expectations:

1. Do not assume that a service animal or ESA is a pet.
2. Refrain from asking questions about a person's disability.

3. Do not pet or feed a service animal or ESA, because it distracts the animal from its work or task and/or could cause harm to the animal.
4. Do not attempt to separate the handler from the animal.
5. Do not harass or deliberately startle an animal.
6. Direct all questions and concerns about animals to the Accommodation Officer.

### **Conflicting Disabilities and/or Medical Conditions**

A student with a disability and/or medical condition that is affected by animals should contact the Accommodation Office if he or she has a health or safety-related concern about exposure to a service animal or an ESA. The person asserting the conflicting disability and/or medical condition must provide appropriate medical documentation that identifies the condition(s) and the need for an accommodation. Appropriate action under federal and state law will be taken to consider the needs of all persons involved and to resolve the conflict as efficiently and effectively as possible.

### **Accommodation Request Process for an Assistance Animal in University Housing Qualifications**

1. Student must have a disability as defined by the ADA or have been diagnosed by a medical professional as having a verifiable disability that is not transitory or minor;
2. There is an identifiable and documented nexus between the disability and the assistance that the animal provides;
3. The animal must be officially registered by the Accommodation Office.

### **Requesting Official Approval of Service Animals and ESAs**

Students who require the use of one of the assistive animals defined above in University Housing should register with the Accommodation Office and submit an [Assistive Animal Accommodation Form](#) after reading this document. If the student is registered for accommodations and the animal is officially approved, the Accommodation Office will work with the Center for Student Life to make any necessary modifications. After acceptance to Rochester Christian University or immediately following an injury or a diagnosis of a disorder, the student should contact the Accommodation Officer to report the disability as soon as possible. Reporting the disability to any other representative of the University will not initiate the official procedure needed to establish eligibility for support services.

An accommodation request is unreasonable if it presents an undue financial or administrative burden on the University, poses a direct threat to the life, health, safety or welfare of the university community, or constitutes a fundamental alteration of the nature of the service or program. In order for an accompanying Assistive Animal to be considered a reasonable accommodation, appropriate documentation meeting the requirements of current Federal Fair Housing regulations must be provided.

### **Guidelines for Documentation of a Specific Disability**

Students bear the responsibility to request accommodation(s) and provide documentation of their disability including **a specific diagnosis** with evidence to support and identify specific limitations. Documentation must be current (within the last three years; however, exceptions are

sometimes necessary depending upon the individual case). Reporting the disability to any other representative of the University will not initiate the official procedure needed to establish eligibility for support services.

### **Service Animals/Service animals in training**

The required documentation regarding the student's specific diagnosis is a signed letter, on professional letterhead, from the student's physical or mental health care provider or licensed therapist or other qualified professional (non-relative) that includes the following information:

- Date of evaluation.
- Diagnosis - specific with International Classification of Diseases (ICD) classification.
- Method of the evaluation/examination.
- Medication - expectation in results of functioning, or cognitive impairment.
- Provision of an identifiable and documented nexus between the disability and the assistance that the animal provides, including animal certification if applicable.

Required documents for service animals include:

- Vaccination Record
- Dog License

### **Emotional Support Animals**

An ESA should not be the student's first or only action toward ensuring their mental health. A Request for Information form (see the bottom of this document) must be completed by the student's current licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, counselor, or social worker. If documentation is not complete, the student will be asked to complete a Release of Confidential Information.

Rochester Christian University requests verification every school year. Up-to-date information which outlines the student's present level of functioning is often essential in assessing the current need for specific accommodation(s).

### **Responsibilities of Handlers with Service Animals or ESAs**

There must be a link between the animal and the resident's disability. Emotional distress resulting from having to give up an animal because of a "no pets" policy does not qualify a person for an accommodation under federal law. Any student approved for an assistance animal in the residence halls must also meet the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requirements/policies for animal health and behavior as well as the Rochester Christian University Housing Contract.

An approved ESA is only permitted in the student's residence hall room and to campus jobs as an approved accommodation from the Accommodation Office and is not permitted in any other areas except as required for transportation off-campus or to eliminate waste, unless approved by the Accommodations Committee. ESAs animals are not permitted to accompany their owner to any other location(s) on campus where animals are not permitted. ESAs may not be left overnight in the student's residence hall without its owner to be cared for by another student. Animals must be taken with the student if they leave for a prolonged period of time. When the student must leave the residence hall, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that that service animal or ESA is appropriately contained within the room and be unable to leave the

resident's room. In order to restrain the animal it is appropriate to use a cage, carrier, crate or other method for this purpose.

Rochester Christian University is not responsible for the cost, care, or supervision of animals. Students with an approved animal are considered "handlers" and are responsible for their animal in the following ways:

- **Vaccination:** In accordance with local ordinances and regulations the animal must be immunized against diseases common to that type of animal, such as the rabies vaccine, and, when appropriate, wear a rabies vaccination tag.
- **Health:** Animals, other than cats and dogs, to be housed in University Housing should 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.
- **Licensing:** The handler must comply with state and local laws regarding licensing. For example, Michigan law requires that every dog be licensed, but provides that service dogs are exempt from the license fee.
- **Control:** Handlers are responsible for the control of their animal at all times. If appropriate, the animal must be on a leash, unless the leash would inhibit the animal's ability to be of service. Otherwise, the animal must be under voice control. Please include training certificates for new Service Animals.
- **Waste Removal:** The handler is responsible for immediate clean-up and proper disposal of all animal waste. Rochester Christian University will designate specific relief areas. It is the responsibility of the handler to remove the waste from university grounds, dispose of it in a plastic bag, and then place that bag in a waste container outside.
- **Damages:** Rochester Christian University will not require any housing fees for approved animals. However, a handler may be charged for damage caused by the service animal or ESA to the same extent that Rochester Christian University would normally charge a person for the damage they cause. A person who brings an animal on university property has all the responsibilities and liabilities placed on a person by any applicable law when that person owns or uses any animal, including liability for any damage done by the animal.
- **Overnight Care:** The owner may not leave the animal overnight in university housing to be cared for by any individual other than the owner. If the owner is absent from university housing overnight, the animal must accompany the owner or make other arrangements to board the animal outside of University Housing.

The ESA must be under the control of the resident, such as on a leash or in a carrier, when being transported to and from the hall. The resident is responsible at all times for the actions of his or her ESA. ESAs shall not disturb, annoy, or cause nuisance to other members of the community. The owner resident is responsible for any odors, noise (barking, whining), damage (scratching, chewing, aggression), or other conduct of his or her emotional support animal that disturbs others or damages the premises. Residents who violate this policy or these obligations may be required to remove the ESA from the residence hall room.

Emotional Support Animals cannot interfere with the reasonable enjoyment of people sharing

the space. ESAs, unless under control, are not permitted in any public common spaces within the residence halls, including but not limited to community/shared bathrooms, lounges, laundry rooms, dining rooms, indoor recreational rooms, computer labs, and study rooms.

### **Removal of an Assistance Animal**

An assistance animal must be kept under control by the person with a disability. An animal may be removed from the campus if the animal does any of the following:

- Is disruptive or out of control and an effective action to control the animal is not taken
- Is not "housebroken" or deposits waste in a designated cage or litter box and the owner fails to clean such cage or box, such that the cleanliness of the room is not maintained
- Poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be mitigated by reasonable modifications of policies, practices or procedures, or the provision of auxiliary aids or services
- Causes substantial physical damage to the property of others that cannot be reduced or eliminated by another reasonable accommodation
- The animal attempts to enter a place on campus where the presence of an animal causes danger to the safety of the handler or other members of the campus community
- The animal attempts to enter any place on campus where an animal's safety is compromised

In considering whether a service animal or ESA poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, Rochester Christian University will make an individualized assessment, based on reasonable judgment, current medical knowledge, or the best available objective evidence to determine:

1. The nature, duration and severity of the risk
2. The probability that the potential injury will actually occur
3. Whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, procedures, or the provision of auxiliary aids or services will mitigate the risk.

### **Grievances**

The Accommodations Committee is responsible for the verification of and making decisions about the exclusion of any animal. The exclusion process will include an individualized evaluation of all facts supporting the exclusion. The handler will have the opportunity to resolve all issues that would substantiate the exclusion prior to a final decision regarding the exclusion.

Any handler who wishes to challenge a decision reached in the request for accommodation may appeal in writing to the Vice President of Academic Affairs (Provost) and Dean of Students. The decision of the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Students is final.

## Summary of Required Forms for Assistive Animals:

### Service Animal/Service Animal in Training

- [Assistive Animal Request Form](#)
- Documentation of disability as described on page 3-4 from a medical professional
- Vaccine Record
- Dog License
- Photo of the Animal

### ESA

- [Assistive Animal Request Form](#)
- Request for Information sheet from medical professional (pages 8-9 below)
- Veterinarian Note (page 10 below)
- Vaccine Record
- Dog License (if applicable)
- A letter from the student explaining how they have exhausted all other treatments and the need for the Emotional Support Animal
- Photo of the Animal

**Once your assistive animal has been approved by the Accommodations office, you will also meet with the Director of Community Life ([residencelife@rochesteru.edu](mailto:residencelife@rochesteru.edu)) to discuss housing arrangements and campus rules pertaining to your animal. If you have a roommate, further documentation will be required.**

### Reference Material

#### Federal Laws:

- [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity](#)
- [U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division – Service Animals](#)

#### Caring for Animals:

- [Questions to ask yourself before getting a pet](#)
- [American Kennel Club: Be a Responsible Dog Owner](#)
- [Guidelines for Responsible Pet Ownership from the American Veterinary Medical Foundation](#)



## REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

### For Emotional Support Animal

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Request: \_\_\_\_\_

Type and age of animal: \_\_\_\_\_

The above-named student has indicated that you are the (physician, psychiatrist, social worker, therapist) who has suggested having an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) in the residence hall will be helpful in alleviating one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of the student's disability. So that we may better evaluate the request for this accommodation, please answer the following questions:

#### **Information About the Student's Disability**

What is the nature of the student's mental health impairment (how is the student substantially limited, what is the diagnosis?)

---

---

---

How long have you been working with the student regarding this mental health diagnosis? \_\_\_\_\_

---

Why would this student be unable to live in housing without the ESA?

---

---

---

#### **Information About the Proposed ESA**

Is this an animal that you specifically prescribed as part of treatment for the student? (What is the treatment plan) \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

What is the therapeutic value of the animal that goes above a traditional pet



relationship? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What symptoms will be reduced by having the ESA?(symptoms, not diagnosis) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What evidence is there that an ESA has helped this student in the past or currently?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Importance of ESA to Student’s Well-Being**

In your opinion, how important is it for the student’s well-being that the ESA be in residence on campus? What consequences, in terms of disability symptomology, may result if the accommodation is not approved? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you discussed the responsibilities associated with properly caring for an animal while engaged in typical college activities and residing in campus housing? Do you believe those responsibilities might exacerbate the student’s symptoms in any way?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. If we need additional information, we may contact you at a later date. We recognize that having an ESA in the residence hall can be a real benefit for someone with a significant mental health disorder, but the practical limitations of our housing arrangements make it necessary to carefully consider the impact of the request for an ESA on both the student and the campus community.

Please provide contact information, sign and date this questionnaire (below), and email it to accommodations @rochesteru.edu or send to:

Rochester Christian University  
Barby Knepper, Accommodation Officer  
800 W Avon Road  
Rochester Hills, MI 48307

Professional Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
License #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_



## Veterinarian Note

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Animal's name and breed: \_\_\_\_\_

To be completed by a licensed Veterinarian:

Animal is up to date on all vaccinations: Yes/No

Animal has been spayed or neutered: Yes/No

Animal is free of fleas, ticks, and other parasites: Yes/No

Animal is house trained (if applicable) Yes/No

Animal has a temperament that makes it safe to be around others: Yes/No

I, \_\_\_\_\_, verify that this animal \_\_\_\_\_ has a clean bill of health and is able to safely live on the campus of Rochester Christian University. I was able to examine the animal on \_\_\_\_\_ and found that this animal does not have any concerning issues that could cause harm to the student, itself, or members of the campus community. The animal is up-to-date on all current vaccinations. Please attach a vaccination record and a clean health bill.

Veterinarian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian License #: \_\_\_\_\_

License Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please share any additional information below, if necessary: