

Federal, state and local laws require that housing providers allow tenants with disabilities to have assistance animals in their homes when necessary to provide an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the dwelling.

Guide to Assistance Animals in Housing

WHAT ARE ASSISTANCE ANIMALS?

Assistance animals are animals that work, provide assistance, provide emotional support, or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability. Under the law, an assistance animal is not considered a pet. Assistance animals have different names — such as service animals, assistive animals, support animals, or therapy animals — but a housing provider should not have different rules for any of the different types. Dogs are the most common assistance animals but other species, such as cats, miniature horses, monkeys, birds, etc., also can be assistance animals.

Some, but not all, animals that assist persons with disabilities are professionally-trained. Other assistance animals are trained by the owners themselves and, in some cases, no special training is required.

- **“No pets” policies at apartment complexes and condos do not apply to assistance animals. Housing providers must make an exception for them.** Neither pet deposits nor pet rents can be assessed. Weight and size limitations do not apply to assistance animals.
- **There are no legal requirements for assistance animals to be specifically identified.** Some assistance animals may wear special vests and harnesses. Some may be licensed or “certified” and/or have identification papers. However, neither can be required.
- **Housing providers cannot restrict the areas where an assistance animal can go.** An assistance animal must be allowed to accompany a person with a disability everywhere he or she normally goes.
- **Housing providers may request verification (typically a note or letter) if the disability or need for the assistance animal is not obvious or otherwise known.** The housing provider cannot, however, ask the extent of the disability or request medical records.
- **A person with a disability may, however, be charged for damages caused to the dwelling by his or her assistance animal.**



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