

Policies of the University of North Texas	Chapter 16
16.002 Campus Access for Service and Comfort Animals for People with Disabilities	Institutional Equity & Diversity

Policy Statement. The University of North Texas ensures that people with disabilities who use service and comfort animals will be able to receive the benefit of the tasks these animals provide or the therapeutic support they offer in accordance with the requirements of federal law.

Application of Policy.

Policy applies to all campus users.

Definitions.

1. **Service Animal.** “Service animal” means a dog (or in rare cases, a miniature horse) that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. The work or task that the dog performs must be directly related to the individual’s disability. Service animals are working animals, not pets. Examples of service animal tasks include but are not limited to guiding a person with blindness, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

2. **Comfort Animal.** “Comfort animal” means an animal that is necessary to afford a person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy university housing. A comfort animal provides emotional support which alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person’s documented disability. Such animals generally have no formal training and are not limited to canines. Unlike service animals, these animals do not assist a person with activities of daily living, nor does it accompany the owner at all times. Such animals are sometimes also known as, assistance, therapy, or emotional support animals.

3. **Pet.** “Pet” means an animal kept for ordinary use and companionship. A pet is not considered a service animal or a comfort animal and is not covered by this policy. Residents are not permitted to keep pets, other than fish, in university residence halls.

Procedure and Responsibilities Related to Service Animals

- A. Access for Service Animals** – UNT generally allows service animals in its buildings, classrooms, residence halls, meetings, dining areas, recreational facilities, activities and events when accompanied by an individual with a disability who indicates the service animal is trained to provide, and does provide, a specific service to them that is directly related to their disability. Service animals may not be permitted if the animal poses a substantial and direct threat to health or safety or when the animal constitutes a fundamental alteration to the nature of a university program or service.
- B. Inquiries Regarding Service Animals** – In general, individuals who are accompanied by a service animal must not be asked to identify the nature or extent of their disability. In regard to a service animal:
1. University officials will not inquire about the qualifications of a canine as a service animal when it is readily apparent that an animal is trained to do work or to perform a task for an individual with a disability (e.g., the dog is observed guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling a person’s wheelchair, or providing assistance with stability or balance to a person with an observable mobility disability.)
 2. University officials will not require documentation of a service animal’s certification, training or license as a service animal.
 3. If it is not readily apparent that an animal is performing work or a task on behalf of an individual with a disability, the individual must be immediately referred to the Office of Disability Accommodations to determine whether an animal qualifies as a service animal. The Office of Disability Accommodation may inquire:
 - a. Whether the animal is required because of a disability; and,
 - b. What work or task the animal has been trained to perform.
 4. If it is not readily apparent that an animal is performing work or a task on behalf of an individual with a disability, and the Office of Disability Accommodation determines that the animal qualifies as a service animal, the ODA will provide a letter of reasonable accommodation to the owner to verify that the animal qualifies and must be permitted on campus in accordance with this policy.

Responsible Party: Office of Disability Accommodation

- C. Responsibilities of Service Animal Owner/Handler**

1. Service animal owners/handlers are responsible for any damage or injury caused by their animals and must take appropriate precautions to prevent property damage and/or injury to others while on campus.
2. Service animals must be under the control of the owner/ handler at all times.
 - a. A service animal should be on a leash when not providing needed service
 - b. To the extent possible the service animal should be unobtrusive to other individuals and the learning, living, working environment.
 - c. Service animals should not be permitted to block aisles or passageways or fire egress.
 - d. To the extent possible the owner/handler should ensure that the animal does not sniff people, dining tables or the personal belongings of others.
 - e. It is recommended that a service animal wear some type of commonly recognized identification symbol, identifying the animal as a working animal, but not disclosing the owner/handler's disability.
3. Cost of care, arrangements and responsibility for the well-being of a service animal are the sole responsibility of the owner/handler including keeping the animal free from fleas and ticks or other pests that may cause infestation.
4. Cleaning up after a service animal is the sole responsibility of the owner/handler. In the event that the owner/handler is not physically able to clean up after a service animal, the owner/handler must hire another individual who is capable of meeting this requirement.

Responsible Party: Owner/handler of service animal

Procedures and Responsibilities Related to Comfort Animals

- A. Comfort Animals Permitted in University Residence Halls** – Comfort animals will be permitted in university residence halls when the comfort animal is approved by the Office of Disability Accommodation and is necessary for the resident with a documented disability to have equal access to housing.
1. Comfort animals are not permitted in a university residence hall until expressly approved by the Office of Disability Accommodation.
 2. Approved comfort animals must be contained within the campus housing unit of the owner/handler, except when transported outside the residential area in an animal carrier or controlled on a leash or harness. Comfort animals are not permitted in any other university facilities.
 3. A comfort animal will be an unreasonable accommodation if the comfort animal presents an undue financial or administrative burden on the university, poses a substantial and direct threat to personal or public safety or constitutes a fundamental alteration of the nature of the service or program of the university.

Responsible Party: Office of Disability Accommodation and Office of Housing and Residence Life

B. Requests for a comfort animal – Requests for accommodation with a comfort animal must be filed with the Office of Disability Accommodation.

1. The accommodation request must document the link between the presence of the comfort animal and a documented disability.
2. Residence requesting accommodation with a comfort animal must notify the Office of Housing and Residence Life concurrent with the request for accommodation.
3. A denied request for approval of a comfort animal may be appealed by filing a complaint with the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity.

Responsible Party: Office of Disability Accommodation and Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity

C. Responsibilities of Comfort Animal Owner - The owner of a comfort animal approved as an accommodation in a university residence hall must:

1. Assure that the comfort animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the residence hall or cause difficulties with other residents.
2. Assume full financial responsibility for damage or injury caused by the comfort animal, including but not limited to replacement of furniture, carpet, windows and wall covering. Expenses related to property damage will be charged at the time of repair or move-out.
3. Assume full financial responsibility for any expense incurred for cleaning above and beyond a standard cleaning, and for any costs related to pest control or pest mitigation.
4. Assume full financial responsibility for the cost of care, arrangements and responsibility for the well-being of the comfort animal. Comfort animals may not be left in the care of another resident. Approved comfort animals must be removed by the student when a student will be away from the residence hall for an extended period.
5. Assume full responsibility for cleaning up after a comfort animal, including disposal of all animal waste in accordance with guidelines established by the Office of Housing and Residence Life.

Responsible Party: Owner of an approved comfort animal

D. Comfort Animal Requirements

1. **Vaccinations** – Comfort animals must be immunized against diseases common to the type of animal. Dogs must have current vaccinations against rabies and wear a rabies vaccination tag. Although not mandated, cats should have normal shots required for a healthy animal.
2. **Licensing** – All comfort animals must be properly licensed.

Responsible Party: Owner of an approved comfort animal

E. **Removal of Service and Comfort Animals** – Service and comfort animals may be removed by the UNT Police or the Office of Disability Accommodations. When a service animal or a comfort is properly removed pursuant to this policy, the Office of Disability Accommodation will work with the owner/handler to determine reasonable alternative opportunities to participate in the university service, program or activity without having the service or comfort animal on university premises. Service and comfort animals may be removed for the following reasons:

1. **Out of control service animal:** An owner/handler may be directed to remove a service or comfort animal that is out of control when the owner/handler does not or cannot take effective action to control the animal. If the improper animal behavior occurs repeatedly, the owner/handler may be prohibited from bringing the service animal into any university facility or comfort animals may be excluded from university residence halls until the owner/handler can demonstrate that she or he has taken significant steps to mitigate the behavior.
2. **Non-Housebroken Service Animal:** An owner/handler may be directed to remove an animal that is not house-broken.
3. **Direct Threat:** An owner/handler may be directed to remove an animal that the Office of Disability Accommodations determines to be a substantial and direct threat to the health and safety of individuals. A direct threat may be based upon the poor health of the service animal, a substantial lack of cleanliness of the service animal, or the presence of a service animal in a sensitive area such as certain laboratories or mechanical or industrial areas. Instances of abuse of a service animal will be referred to the Dean of Students or other appropriate authority.

Responsible Party: Office of Disability Accommodation and UNT Police

- F. **Conflicting Disabilities** – Individuals on the university campus may have allergic reactions to animals that are substantial enough to qualify as a disability. In such cases, the university will consider the needs of both persons in meeting its obligations to reasonably accommodate all disabilities and to resolve the problem as efficiently and expeditiously as possible. Students requesting allergy accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Accommodations. Employees requesting accommodations should contact Human Resources.

Responsible Party: Office of Disability Accommodation and Human Resources

Procedures for Faculty, Staff, all Other Members of Campus Community.

- A. Members of the university community must abide by the following practices:
1. A service animal must be permitted to accompany its owner/handler at all times and in all places on campus, and during off campus UNT sponsored events unless the animal creates a fundamental alteration of the university program and may be removed in accordance with the provisions of this policy.
 2. Animals should never be petted or touched unless invited to do so by the owner.
 3. Animals should not be fed by anyone other than the owner.
 4. Animals should not be separated from their owners.
 5. Owners/handlers of a service animal must never be questioned about the nature or extent of their disability. This is a private matter that should only be addressed by the ODA or other campus administrator who has a need to know.
 6. Refer conflicts related to animals and allergies or other disabilities to the ODA.
 7. Service dogs in training should be allowed the same access as fully trained service dogs.

Responsible Party: All members of the university community

Responsible Parties: Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity, ODA, Campus Housing

References and Cross-references.

Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act of 2008

US Department of Justice Service Animal Regulations

Fair Housing Act

Texas Human Resource Code Sec. 121.002

UNT Disability Accommodation Policy for Students and Academic Units 16.001

UNT Employment of People with Disabilities/Workplace Accommodation 05.011

Forms and Tools. <http://disability.unt.edu/services/apply>

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