Support Animals in the Residence Halls

Handler Guidelines

Westfield State University is committed to making its educational programs and facilities accessible to people with disabilities. By policy, animals are not allowed in residential and administrative buildings on campus. However, a reasonable accommodation of a support animal in a student residence will be determined on a case by case basis as a modification to this policy. Students who require a support animal as a reasonable accommodation must register with the Banacos Academic Center as a student with a disability, fill out the Center’s reasonable accommodation request form and provide appropriate supporting documentation. This accommodation must be requested by the student annually. The University reserves the right to amend or make changes to this document as deemed necessary. Support animals are not allowed in any building on campus other than the assigned residence of the student approved for the reasonable accommodation. Since these guidelines are primarily put into place to protect the health and safety of the handler, other community members, and the animal itself, please be aware that failure to abide by these guidelines may result in immediate removal of the animal and/or Student Conduct action.

1. The student, hereinafter referred to as the “handler”, has sole responsibility for the care and conduct of the support animal. The University is not responsible for the care, conduct or supervision of any support animal.
2. The handler must abide by all state and local laws regarding animals. The handler must provide the following to the Banacos Advisor when registering a support animal:
   1. Proof of legally required vaccinations if the approved animal is a dog, cat, or ferret.
   2. Proof of licensing in home town or the City of Westfield if the approved animal is a dog.
3. When an animal is taken out of the handler’s room/apartment/suite it must be kept harnessed/leashed or in a carrier, crate or cage under the control of the handler.
4. Animals must remain in the handler’s room/apartment/suite. Requests for expanded approval in other areas of the handler’s assigned residence hall must be approved by the Area Coordinator/Residence Director.
5. The handler is responsible for utilizing the following approved waste guidelines:
   1. Animals that make waste outdoors should do so on grass-covered areas. The Woodward Center, athletic fields, and areas being used by Intramurals are prohibited. The handler is responsible for immediate cleanup of the animal’s waste.
   2. Animals who make waste indoors will need to have a litter box or other appropriate receptacle provided by the handler and located in the handler’s bedroom. The handler is expected to clean waste receptacles regularly.
   3. All animal waste must be disposed of in a designated trash receptacle outside of the residence hall.
6. Animals, their crates, litter boxes and other related materials must be kept clean in an area designated by the Environmental Services staff in the handler’s residence hall. The handler will need to coordinate the use of the designated area with the Environmental Services staff and Area Coordinator/Residence Director of the handler’s residence hall.
7. The animal must not be left alone in the residence for more than consecutive hours. When leaving the campus for more than the number of hours identified above, the animal must accompany the handler and may not be left in the care of another student.
8. When the animal is left alone in the handler’s room the animal should be appropriately crated or caged to ensure it does not escape in case University staff need to enter the room.
9. Animals must not constitute a direct threat to the safety of the handler or others.
10. Animals must not make excessive noise that has the potential to disrupt other community members.
11. The handler is presumed financially responsible for property damage caused by the animal including, but not limited to, cost of repairs, replacement or extraordinary cleaning of facilities or furnishings and any bodily injury or personal injury caused to other persons by the animal. Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 140, Section 155 includes additional liability information for handlers with dogs.
12. Violations of these guidelines may be documented and reported to the Area Coordinator/Residence Director of the handler’s residence hall including observed violations by staff or others as well as violations discovered during Health & Safety Inspections.
13. The handler is responsible for notifying the handler’s Banacos Advisor if the handler decides to no longer have their animal on campus.

Since these guidelines are primarily put into place to protect the health and safety of the handler, other community members, and the animal itself, please be aware that failure to abide by these guidelines may result in immediate removal of the animal. Failure to abide by these guidelines is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. Students violating these guidelines will be referred to the Student Conduct office. In cases where the University determines it is necessary to remove an animal from the residence halls, the University may board the animal at the place of its choosing. The handler will be responsible for all costs associated with the removal and boarding of the animal.

*Student Signature*

*Printed Name*

*Today’s Date*