

National Alliance to End Homelessness Sample Guidelines for Emergency Shelters that Welcome Service/Emotional Support and Other Animals

The following are sample policies and procedures for emergency shelters that are welcoming people and their animals to stay in the shelter. These are based on actual shelter policies¹ and can be adapted and used by emergency shelter providers.

Definitions

Person or Individual with a Disability: A person who has a sensory, physical or mental impairment that limits one or more major life activities, including but not limited to walking, talking, seeing, breathing, hearing, or living independently.

Pet: A domesticated animal kept for pleasure or companionship. Pets are not considered service or emotional support animals.

Service Animal: Any dog or other common domestic animal individually trained to do work for or perform tasks for the benefit of a qualified person with a disability. The “training” of a service animal need not be formal or professional, nor result in any special license or certification. Examples of service animals include guide dogs to help people with visual impairments; hearing/signal dogs to assist people who are deaf or hearing impaired; warning dogs to assist people with epilepsy; psychiatric service animals trained to do work or perform tasks for individuals with psychiatric disabilities (e.g. providing counterbalance/bracing for participant’s dizziness resulting from psychotropic medication); and other animals that have been trained to assist individuals with a mobility or health impairment, in performing tasks including, but not limited to, carrying, fetching, opening doors, and ringing doorbells. A service animal is not a pet.

Emotional Support Animal: An animal that helps an individual with psychiatric disabilities manage or alleviate the symptoms of those disabilities, by providing therapeutic nurture, comfort and support. Emotional support animals are not required to have specialized training.

Policies

Both service and emotional support animals and pets are eligible to come into emergency shelter. Upon entry into the program the participant must be advised of the following:

- All animals must be registered with the shelter.
- The animal must display behavior that is appropriate for a communal living space and will be held to the same standards as all residents. If the animal displays inappropriate (e.g. aggressive or destructive)

¹ The content from these policies and procedures came from [LA Family Housing](#) and [Catholic Charities of Santa Rosa](#).

behavior, the animal will be assessed and provided with resources to assist with the issue. If the behavior does not improve, the animal may be provided with temporary housing resources outside of the shelter. Participants may be required to remove their animals for any of the following reasons:

- The animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the safety of others and the threat cannot be eliminated by a reasonable modification.
- The animal is disruptive and interfering with the program and the participant does not take effective action to control it.
- The animal is creating an unsanitary condition.
- Participants are responsible for taking care of their animal. This includes:
 - The animal must have food and fresh water.
 - Dogs must be walked on a daily basis.
 - Waste material is to be picked-up and properly disposed.
 - The animal must be kept clean – e.g. bathed one time per week or as needed; the participant is responsible for cleaning the bathroom tub or sink if used for animal washing.
 - Crate/carriers must be washed on a weekly basis or as needed.
 - Participants must keep their animal current with any required vaccinations (proof is required) and attend to any medical needs that their animal may have.
- Animals must be free of fleas and other pests.
- Owners must agree to store food for their animals in designated areas and may not to leave food or water for their animal outside of their dwelling where it may attract other animals.
- Participants must feed, water, clean, exercise and cleanup after their animal.
- All animals must be appropriately contained. For example, dogs must be on a leash or in a crate while indoors and cats must be carried or kept in an appropriately sized crate/carrier when outside the participant's dwelling.
- Animals must be in a crate if left unattended. If the owner allows another participant to watch the animal while they are off site, this decision is solely the responsibility of the owner and the animal's behavior remains the responsibility of the owner.
- The animal's owner is accountable for providing for and taking care of the animal. The shelter does not assume any liability for the animal while it is in the shelter.
- Owners must have an identified emergency care person.
 - Owners must provide the name and contact information of an emergency care person who will take care of their animal in the event that the owner is in the hospital, jail, or otherwise indisposed.

- Animal control will be contacted if the emergency care person is unable to be contacted or unwilling to care for the animal.

The following are recommendations for the animals before entering the shelter. If animals do not meet these suggested policies, the shelter staff is able to provide information about low-cost/free resources for animals to receive these services:

- Pets should have a current vaccinations (e.g. rabies) and city licensure.
- Dogs and cats should be spayed/neutered.
- If applicable, participants should register their animal as a service animal or emotional support animal as it may facilitate the process to obtain permanent housing.

Service Animals

Clients may request permission to be accompanied by a service animal. Service animals are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, staff should limit inquiries to the following two questions:

- Is the animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

Staff should not ask about the person's disability or ask that the animal demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task. Participants that require the assistance of a service animal are not required to provide any form of documentation. Participants that require the assistance of an emotional support animal may be required to provide documentation from a medical provider, psychologist, social worker, non-medical service provider, peer support group member, or other reliable third party that the participant has a disability and that the animal provides support that alleviates a symptom or effect of their disability. A determination regarding whether any documentation for an emotional support animal is required will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If the client answers 'yes' to either of the questions, they are entitled to be accompanied by the service animal pending immunization verification of the following:

- Rabies Certification
- Spray/Neuter Certification (if applicable)

My designated emergency care person is: _____ who can be reached at the following
address and telephone number _____

I understand the shelter guidelines for service/emotional support animals. I know that I can be required to remove my animal from the shelter if I do not follow the Participant Animal Guidelines.

Participant's name (**print**)

Participant's name (**signature**)

Staff's signature

Date

More information:

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/ReasonableAccommodations15