

Special Requests For Campus Housing

A major part of the college educational experience is for students to learn to live on their own. Utica College provides on-campus housing to enhance intellectual, social, and cultural development through the experience of living with other individuals who bring a variety of social and cultural backgrounds to the community.

Special Requests for Residence Hall Assignments:

Occasionally, a student may feel that he or she needs special consideration in residence hall assignments. When such a situation occurs, the student should contact the Director of Residence Life to discuss the request for special consideration. If the student is making the request due to a disability, the Director of Residence Life will advise the student to contact the Director of Learning Services regarding what information is necessary and appropriate to support the request.

Please note that requests for single rooms based on a student's desire to have a "quiet, undisturbed place to study" will be considered only in unusual circumstances. By virtue of the shared facilities, resources, and number of people living under one roof in the residence halls, a single room does not provide for such quiet, distraction-free space to any appreciable degree beyond living in a standard double room.

Special requests for residence hall assignments should be made as soon as the student has decided to attend or continue at Utica College. ***Special requests need to be submitted each year, they do not carry forward.*** All requests are reviewed and prioritized according to severity of need. Every effort will be made to meet the student's needs. However, a large number of high priority needs and limited residence hall space may mean that not all requests will be met immediately. If the request cannot be honored for the upcoming semester, the student will be put on a waiting list for consideration as openings occur.

To aid our decision making process, an appropriate professional should provide the following information to the Director of Residence Life and/or to the Director of Learning Services in writing:

- Information regarding the condition or need that is the basis of the request.
- An explanation of the current impact of the condition on the student's ability to function in a college residential environment.
- A clear description of the desired housing configuration.
- An explanation of how the request relates to the impact of the condition.
- An indication of the level of need for the recommended configuration, and the consequences of not receiving the request.
- Possible alternatives if the recommended configuration is not possible.

Documentation supporting a request will be reviewed by the Director of Residence Life and/or the Director of Learning Services. All information is considered confidential. Listed below are some of the factors we consider when evaluating housing requests.

Severity of the condition:

- Is impact of the condition life threatening if the request is not met?
- Is there a negative health impact that may be permanent if the request is not met?
- Is the request an integral component of a treatment plan for the condition in question?
- What is the likely impact on academic performance if the request is not met?
- What is the likely impact on social development if the request is not met?
- What is the likely impact on the student's level of comfort if the request is not met?

Feasibility and Availability:

- Is space available that meets the student's needs?
- Can space be adapted to provide the requested configuration without creating a safety hazard (electrical load, emergency egress, etc.)?
- Are there other effective methods or housing configurations that would achieve similar benefits as the requested configuration?
- How does meeting this request impact housing commitments to other students?

The Director of Residence Life, or his/her designee, will notify students of the decision that has been made regarding any special requests for housing.

Special Request for an animal in the Residence Halls

1) Pets:

Per the Utica College Residence Hall Agreement document, students are not permitted to have non-fish pets in the residence halls. A student may make a request to the Director of Residence Life to keep small fish in a small fish tank in his/her residence hall room with the approval of all roommates.

2) Service Animals

A dog that is a service animal is not a pet.

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (as revised 2010), a “service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.” The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability. The provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition.

A service animal may reside with its student-owner in the residence hall when that student-owner is a person with a disability who needs the use of a service animal.

Students with disabilities who will use a service animal on campus should contact the Director of Learning Services for further information.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure the health and well-being of the service animal, which includes keeping the dog clean and properly disposing of the dog's waste. In addition to meeting local licensing and leash requirements, the service animal must have a health statement, including vaccinations, from a licensed veterinarian dated within the past year. The service animal should wear some type of commonly recognized identification symbol at all times, and be under the student-owner's control at all times. The student-owner is responsible for the service animal's behavior and actions. A service animal may be excluded from campus when that dog's behavior poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others, or when that dog's actions are unruly, disruptive, or destructive.

3) Emotional Support Animals

An animal that is an emotional support animal is neither a pet nor a service animal.

According to the Fair Housing Act, emotional support animals “provide emotional support to persons with disabilities who have a disability-related need for such support.” Under the FHA, individuals with a disability may be entitled to keep an emotional support animal as “a reasonable accommodation in housing facilities.”¹ In order to qualify for such an accommodation, the emotional support animal “must be necessary to afford the individual an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling or to participate in the housing service or program. Further, there must be a relationship, or nexus, between the individual’s disability and the assistance the animal provides.”²

Utica College will consider making an accommodation to the housing policy to allow an emotional support animal to reside with its student-owner in the residence hall. Students with disabilities who want to request an accommodation to have an emotional support animal in the residence hall should contact the Director of Learning Services, and follow the process for documentation and determination of eligibility found in the Office of Learning Services Student Handbook.

The Director of Learning Services has responsibility for making the determination of whether or not submitted documentation is appropriate, and whether or not the accommodation for a particular emotional support animal to be in residence is reasonable and can be provided to the student-owner.

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2/17/2011 letter from the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Enforcement and Programs addressed to FHEO Region Director and Regional Counsel

² Ibid.

If the accommodation is granted, it is the student-owner's responsibility to ensure the health and well-being of the emotional support animal, which includes keeping the animal clean and properly disposing of the animal's waste. In addition to meeting any local licensing requirements, the emotional support animal must have a health statement, including any necessary vaccinations, from a licensed veterinarian dated within the past year. The emotional support animal must be under the student-owner's control at all times, and remain in the student-owner's residence hall room. If the student-owner is not present in the residence hall room, the emotional support animal must be contained in an appropriate enclosure within the room. The student-owner is responsible for the emotional support animal's behavior and actions. An emotional support animal may be excluded from the residence hall when that animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others, or when that animal's actions are unruly, disruptive, or destructive.

