



## How and When to Make a Reasonable Accommodation Request for Your Assistance Animal

You can make a reasonable accommodation request at application, during tenancy, or even if you have received a termination notice.

- Make the request in writing to keep a paper trail
- In the request make a connection between your disability, your assistance animal, and how the animal will help you gain equal access to or equal enjoyment of housing
- If your disability and need for an assistance animal is not evident, you will need to provide verification from a qualified professional (ex: psychologist, physician, nurse practitioner, drug and alcohol counselor). Do *not* rely on predatory online verifiers.

## About Us

The Fair Housing Council of Oregon (FHCO) is a statewide civil rights organization that proactively promotes housing justice, equity, and inclusion. Our mission is to end illegal housing discrimination and promote equal access to housing choice through education and enforcement of fair housing law.

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# ASSISTANCE ANIMALS AND FAIR HOUSING LAWS

*Fair Housing Council of Oregon*



## What Is an Assistance Animal?

In fair housing, *assistance animal* is an umbrella term that includes:

- Trained services animals
- Companion animals
- Emotional support animals

Assistance animals are *not* pets. Their primary purpose is to assist people living with disabilities. For example, assistance animals can help with:

- Sight, hearing, balance
- Fetching items
- Detecting oncoming migraines and seizures
- Lowering blood pressure and anxiety
- Alleviating symptoms of depression

Housing providers cannot charge residents fees or deposits for their assistance animals. Residents are still responsible for any damage caused by their assistance animal.

## Reasonable Accommodations for Assistance Animals

People living with disabilities, whether physical or mental, have a right to request to their housing provider a *reasonable accommodation* for their assistance animals.

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*“Animals are such agreeable friends—  
they ask no questions, they pass no  
criticisms.” ~ George Eliot*

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A reasonable accommodation request involves asking a housing provider to make an exception to a standard, policy, or procedure. A person with a disability can request a reasonable accommodation for an assistance animal as long as they show they need the assistance animal is for *equal access to or equal enjoyment of housing*.

## Breed, Weight, Species, Number

Unlike with pets, a housing provider cannot deny an assistance animal because of its breed or weight. A large dog, for example, may be needed to help a person maintain their balance.

A particular breed of dog, such as a pit bull, cannot be denied solely because of alleged reputation of the breed. As for species, with proper verification, an exotic bird may serve as an emotional support animal to a veteran living with PTSD, as below. Also, if a person can verify their need for more than one assistance animal, that should be allowed. For instance, a person with blindness may need a seeing eye dog while also needing an emotional support cat for their anxiety.



## Unreasonable Requests

There are four reasons why a request might be considered *unreasonable*:

- too costly for the housing provider
- too much of an administrative burden
- Not in housing provider’s job description
- Direct threat to residents of the property