

**Tennessee Technological University  
Policy No. 306**



*Effective Date: January 1, 2015*

**Policy No.:** 306

**Policy Name:** Emotional Support/Comfort Animals

**Policy Subject:** Emotional Support/Comfort Animals

**Date Revised:** January 1, 2015

## **I. Purpose**

Tennessee Tech recognizes the importance of Emotional Support/Comfort Animals to individuals with disabilities and has established the following policy regarding Emotional Support/Comfort Animals to assist people with disabilities.

This is a joint policy shared by 1) the Office of Disabilities (ODS), who will accept requests and maintain the student documentation for the ODS Housing Committee (which will be comprised of employees from disability services, health services, counseling and residential life, and appointed by the Director of the Office of Disability Services), 2) the Office of Residential Life, who will work directly with the approved residents to explain or enforce all policies regarding the Emotional Support/Comfort Animal, and 3) the residents, who will provide all necessary documentation and adhere to Tennessee Tech and residential life policies.

## **II. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every four years or whenever circumstances require review, whichever is earlier, by the Directors of the Office of Disability Services and the Office of Residential Life with recommendations for revision presented to the Administrative Council and University Assembly.

## **III. Scope**

This policy applies only to Emotional Support/Comfort Animals in Tennessee Tech's housing facilities. Permission to have an Emotional Support/Comfort Animal under this policy does not grant the individual permission to have the Emotional Support/Comfort Animal present in any other campus facility or Tennessee Tech property.

## **IV. Policy**

### **A. Emotional Support/Comfort Animals Defined**

"Emotional Support/Comfort Animals" or "Animals" are those that individuals with disabilities utilize for emotional support, well-being, or comfort. Because they are not individually trained to perform work or tasks, support animals are not service animals. Emotional Support/Comfort Animals shall not reside in Tennessee Tech housing without the advanced approval of relevant Tennessee Tech officials. Requests for an Emotional Support/Comfort Animal will be evaluated and approved by the ODS Housing Committee on a case by case basis.

### **B. Procedures to Request Emotional Support/Comfort Animals in Tennessee Tech Housing**

1. Emotional Support/Comfort Animals are approved on a case by case basis and may not reside in Tennessee Tech housing without the prior approval from the ODS Housing Committee.
2. A resident requesting permission to have an Animal in his or her on-campus housing must provide the ODS with appropriate documentation.
3. Documentation of the need for an Animal must include:
  - a. A signed letter, on professional letterhead, from the person's physical or mental healthcare provider or licensed therapist. Any such provider or therapist should be familiar with the professional literature concerning the assistive and/or therapeutic benefits of Emotional Support/Comfort Animals for people with disabilities. At a minimum, the letter should include the following items:
    - i. The provider's diagnosis of the person's disability.
    - ii. A clear description of the current impact and functional limitations resulting from the disability.
    - iii. The provider's confirmation that the Animal has been prescribed for treatment purposes and is necessary to help alleviate symptoms associated with the person's condition and/or to help the person use and enjoy university housing services.
    - iv. The provider's description of the support that the Animal will provide.
    - v. Any additional rationale or statement Tennessee Tech may reasonably need to understand the basis for the professional opinion.
    - vi. A clear description of the current impact and functional limitations resulting from the disability.
4. The ODS Housing Committee will review the documentation within 10 business days of receipt of all documentation. If the Committee approves the request, the resident will be contacted by the Office of Disability Services to meet with the Office of Residential Life. At this meeting, the Office of Residential Life will review the policies and responsibilities (Section C) with the owner of the Animal.

#### C. Owner's Responsibilities in Tennessee Tech Housing

1. The owner of the Emotional Support/Comfort Animal is responsible for assuring that the animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the residence or cause difficulties for other residing residents.

2. The owner is financially responsible for the actions of the Animal including bodily injury or property damage. The owner's responsibility covers but is not limited to replacement of furniture, carpet, floor tile, window, wall covering, and the like. The owner is expected to cover these costs at the time of repair or move-out, whichever is earlier.
3. The owner is responsible for any expenses incurred for cleaning above and beyond a standard cleaning and for repairs to Tennessee Tech premises that are assessed after the student and Animal vacate the residence. Tennessee Tech shall have the right to bill the owner/resident account for any unmet obligations.
4. The owner must notify the Office of Residential Life in writing if the Animal is no longer needed as an Emotional Support/Comfort Animal or is no longer in residence. To replace an Animal the owner must file a new request following the procedures outlined in Section IV.B.
5. The owner's residence may be inspected for fleas, ticks or other pests during regular Health and Safety Checks or as needed. The Office of Residential Life staff will schedule the inspection. If fleas, ticks or other pests are detected through inspection, the residence will be treated using approved fumigation methods by a university-approved pest control service. The owner will be billed for the expense of any pest treatment to the room or any necessary corresponding areas above and beyond standard pest management in the residence halls.
6. All roommates of the owner must sign an agreement allowing the Animal to be in residence with them. In the event that roommates do not agree to have an Animal with them in their room, the owner, in conjunction with the Office of Residential Life, will make other room and roommate arrangements.
7. Tennessee Tech may remove or require the removal of any Animal that poses a threat to the health or safety of others, is not housebroken, causing undue noise, or damage or otherwise.
8. Emotional Support/Comfort Animals found tethered, unattended, or abandoned may be impounded in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
9. Emotional Support/Comfort Animals may not be left overnight in Tennessee Tech housing to be cared for by another student. Animals must be taken with the student if they leave campus overnight or for a prolonged period during the day.
10. The Office of Residential Life maintains the right to relocate the owner and Animal as necessary according to its general contractual agreement with the student.
11. The owner agrees to and is responsible for immediate clean-up of all animal waste. Emotional Support/Comfort Animals must be toileted in areas designated

by Tennessee Tech. Indoor animal waste, such as cat litter, must be placed in a sturdy plastic bag and securely tied up before being disposed of, in outside trash dumpsters. Litter boxes and cages should be placed on mats so that waste is not tracked onto floor surfaces. Litter boxes, cages, or other animal containers must also be cleaned regularly as to not cause any undue odor in the room or surrounding areas.

12. Should the Animal be removed from the premises for any reason, the owner is expected to fulfill his/her housing obligations for the remainder of the housing contract.
13. The care and supervision of the Animal are the responsibility of the owner. The owner is required to maintain control of the Animal at all times, which includes the use of a leash or other appropriate control.
14. If any aspect or circumstance of the condition, health, or behavior of any Animal on campus is deemed by Tennessee Tech to be a threat to the health or safety of any member of the campus community, then that Animal may be impounded in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
15. In accordance with local ordinances and regulations, the Animal must be immunized against diseases common to that type of animal, and registered if required by law. Dogs and cats must have current vaccination against rabies and wear a rabies vaccination tag.
16. Emotional Support/Comfort Animals other than cats and dogs to be housed in Tennessee Tech housing must have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian. Documentation that demonstrates this can be a vaccination certificate or a veterinarian's statement regarding the Animal's health. This will be monitored by the Office of Residential Life. Tennessee Tech may direct that the Animal receive veterinary attention as a condition of its continuing residency in Tennessee Tech housing.
17. Residential Life and the ODS Housing Committee may place other reasonable conditions or restrictions on the animals depending on the nature and characteristics of the animal.

#### **V. Violation of Policy**

Any violation of this policy may result in the immediate removal of the Animal in addition to the student's referral to the Office of Student Affairs for the appropriate discipline under Tennessee Tech's student disciplinary rules, if applicable.

#### **VI. Interpretation**

The Office of Disability Service Housing Committee has the final authority to interpret the terms of this policy.

**VII. Citation of Authority for Policy**

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Section 504 - The Fair Housing Act.

Approved by:

Administrative Council: 2014-11-12

University Assembly: 2014-11-19