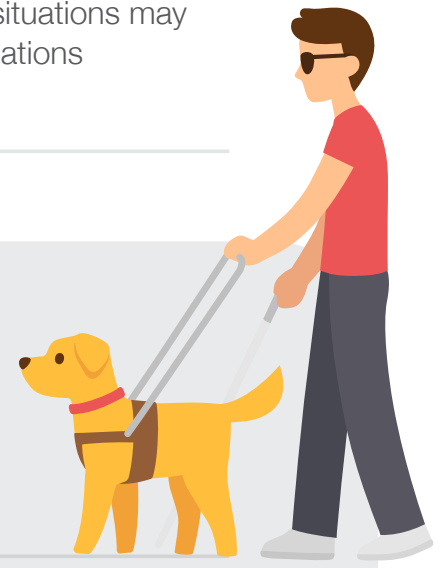


Fur-Real Answers to Ruff Questions

How to handle difficult conversations about assistance animals

Assistance animals provide immeasurable support and companionship for the residents who depend on them. But as multifamily professionals, navigating conversations related to your community's assistance animal policy can be difficult. While individual situations may vary, here are some real responses to the most common "ruff" conversations surrounding assistance animals.

1 A RESIDENT SAYS, "Why do they get to live with their dog, and I don't?"



It is common for other residents to resent that exceptions are made to a no-pet policy for assistance animals. When discussing the situation, never disclose someone's disability. Instead, limit your explanation to a general reference of your written policy.

BEST RESPONSE:

"We have a no-pet policy, but we do make exceptions in certain instances as required by law."

2 The assistance animal certification comes from a suspicious website.

Just because someone has registered an animal on a website does not mean it meets the legal requirements for a reasonable accommodation. You can ask for more information as long as you do it carefully – ideally with the help of legal counsel. A note from a healthcare professional can confirm that the resident needs the assistance animal.



BEST RESPONSE:

"We also need a note from a healthcare professional explaining how the assistance animal will help you so that we can properly evaluate your request."

3 A resident without an evident disability does not provide documentation to support a reasonable accommodation within an acceptable time frame.

When it comes to determining an acceptable time frame to provide documentation, there is no firm industry standard. In most cases, two weeks would be considered an appropriate amount of time for a resident to provide the information needed. Ultimately, individual circumstances may vary, and it's important to be understanding. For example, someone may have a work conflict or cannot get an appointment with their doctor immediately. However, you can require proof that they are making progress (i.e., an appointment has been made).

HOW TO RESPOND:

"We are evaluating your eligibility for the requested accommodation, but until you supply the documentation, we cannot grant your request."



4 The resident does not want to disclose the disability.



The resident and/or healthcare professional is not required to disclose the disability, but they do need to provide enough information to evaluate the request and determine if it will cause undue hardship. You will need adequate information related to how the animal helps with the disability and why it is necessary to have the animal live with the resident.

HOW TO RESPOND:

"You don't have to disclose the disability, but we do need enough information to properly evaluate your accommodation request."

By understanding residents' rights and clearly communicating your policies, you can handle tough conversations about assistance animals effectively and compassionately.

Grace Hill Can Help!

Need help with your assistance animal policies or training?
Contact our Fair Housing experts today!

