



Housing Accommodation Request, Policy and Procedure

The Student Accessibility Center is responsible for evaluating whether to grant or deny requests for reasonable accommodation in university housing. The Student Accessibility Center works in collaboration with the Student Health Center, Counseling Services and Residence Life to meet the needs of students requesting a Housing Accommodation. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate all requests, complete the online form, and ensure that a licensed healthcare professional submits the documentation in a timely manner. Ashland University recognizes the importance of providing reasonable accommodations in its housing policies and practices where necessary for individuals with disabilities to fully participate in the university housing program. This Policy explains the specific requirements and guidelines which govern requests for reasonable accommodation in university housing. Ashland University reserves the right to amend this policy at any time as circumstances require.

PLEASE NOTE: This policy and procedure does not supersede other housing policies or procedures or guarantee a student housing. All criteria for housing must be met as outlined in the Student Handbook and the annual room lottery and selection process.

Requests for reasonable accommodation in university housing policies and practices are governed by the following requirements:

FORMS TO BE SUBMITTED:

FORM 1: An individual with a disability must complete the **Housing Accommodation Request Form** (student completes this online in Etrieve) to request a reasonable accommodation. If the individual requires assistance in completing the Request Form because of his/her disability, the Student Accessibility Center will provide assistance in completing the form.

FORM 2: The university may require the individual to designate a reliable third party who can verify that the requested accommodation is necessary for individuals with disabilities to fully participate in the university housing program. Students will download the **Housing Accommodation Verification Form** for the healthcare provider to complete. If the third party returns the Verification Form without sufficient information for the Student Accessibility Center to determine whether an accommodation is necessary, the Director of the center will inform the individual in writing of the verification's insufficiency and may request additional information, including speaking directly with the individual supplying the third-party verification.

DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

While third-party documentation may be sufficient to establish the presence of a disability, documentation alone does not inform whether accommodations are reasonable. Medical information will be considered but is not the definitive information that informs our final decisions. We consider a multitude of factors. A medical provider's recommended accommodation does not automatically bind SAC/AU to approve the accommodation as being reasonable. When recommendations within documentation would primarily enhance academic success or are considered outside the scope of what is necessary for equal access, the student will be referred to other resources and or given options that may be able to address the specific need. All documentation is reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and accommodations are determined through an interactive process. If the third party returns the Verification Form without sufficient information for the Student Accessibility Center to determine whether an accommodation is necessary, the Director of the Student Accessibility Center will inform the individual in writing of the verification's insufficiency and may request additional information, including speaking directly with the individual supplying the third-party verification, within seven (7) business days of receiving the verification. The individual making the request for accommodation must cooperate with the Student Accessibility Center in a timely manner in providing all information needed to determine whether the requested accommodation is necessary.

Please note that a medical diagnosis and recommendation for a particular accommodation do not establish a disability-related need for the accommodation. A student's professional healthcare provider documentation must establish the following for a condition to be considered a disability:

1. Compelling evidence including a history of a physical or psychological impairment that limits the student's participation in a major life activity;*
2. A substantial degree of functional impairment;
3. Sufficient explanation of how the requested housing assignment is necessary for the student to access or utilize college housing.

Obvious Disability

- If the individual's disability and the necessity for the accommodation are obvious (e.g. an individual with a physical disability using a wheelchair needs an accessible room), the individual need only explain what type of accommodation he/she is requesting. No verification of disability and/or necessity is required under these circumstances.

Non-Obvious Disability/Necessity

- If the disability is obvious but the need for the accommodation is not obvious, the University may require the individual to complete the Housing Accommodation Verification Form for University Housing and designate a health care provider or other professional who can verify that the requested accommodation is necessary to provide the individual an equal opportunity to participate in the University housing program.
- If the disability and necessity for the accommodation are not obvious, the Student Accessibility Center will require the individual to complete the Verification Form and designate a health care provider or other professional (e.g., a physician, optometrist, psychiatrist, psychologist, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, or nurse), who can verify that the individual has a disability and that the requested accommodation is necessary to provide the individual an equal opportunity to participate in the University housing program.

Professionals Who Can Provide Clinical Documentation

- The provider must have comprehensive training and experience in the relevant specialty and hold appropriate licensure and/or certification
- The provider must be familiar with the history and functional limitations of the student's condition and provide detailed information about the substantial nature and level of the impairment and its impact on major life activities
- The documentation provided generally cannot be from a family member or someone with a personal relationship with the student or student's family

Recency of Documentation

- Documentation must reflect the status of the student's current functional limitations
- Typically, diagnoses with no anticipated fluctuation of functional limitations require a recent report written in the past two years
- Typically, diagnoses that may change or are considered episodic, require a recent report written in the past six months

Documentation must include:

- A specific medical diagnosis, including present symptoms, their duration, and severity
- Objective measures used to determine diagnosis (attach results)
- Description of the student's presenting impairment and its substantial impact on major life functions in an educational, residential living, and/or residential dining (i.e., dining hall) environment

- Description of any history that is relevant to the student's current functioning
- Duration the student has been under the clinician's care and date of last contact

DEADLINES

Ashland University will accept and consider requests for reasonable accommodation in university housing at any time. The individual making the request for accommodation should complete and provide the request form to the Student Accessibility Center as soon as practically possible before moving into university housing. However, if the request for accommodation is made after the deadlines listed below, Ashland University cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet the individual's accommodation needs during the first semester or term of occupancy. Due to the limited number of residential facilities on campus, we cannot guarantee housing accommodations for requests to be in specific locations or buildings. If the need for the accommodation arises when an individual already resides in university housing, he/she should contact the Student Accessibility Center and complete the request form as soon as possible. Ashland University cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet the accommodation needs during the semester or term in which the request is received.

To ensure the best opportunity for priority consideration, it is imperative that students submit the application and all requested documentation by the deadlines indicated below:

- **New students and transfer students:** Submit your Housing Accommodations Request Form at least **30 days** before the start of the Fall or Spring semester, depending on when you plan to begin.
- **Returning students:** If you are interested in a housing accommodation or currently have an accommodation and want to maintain that accommodation next year, you must go through the renewal process. Submit your Housing Accommodations Request Form by **January 31** to apply for housing accommodations for the following academic year. Accommodations need to be renewed every year; they do not roll over from year to year.

PROCEDURES:

1. The student will submit the completed Housing Accommodation Request (Form 1) online and request supporting documentation from their licensed healthcare provider (Housing Accommodation Verification).
2. The Student Accessibility Center will notify the student of the receipt of the forms and let the student know if any additional information or documentation is needed.
3. The Director of the Student Accessibility Center will engage in the interactive process with the student by scheduling an intake meeting to review all documentation related to the request.
4. Upon receipt of all the necessary documentation, the Housing Accommodation Review Team (Residence Life Director, Director of Counseling/Health Center, and the Student Accessibility Center) will determine whether appropriate reasonable accommodations can be made based on availability of housing and on the submitted information. Any request received AFTER a posted deadline will be reviewed in the order it was received.
5. The student will be notified in writing whether or not the accommodation can reasonably be made. This notification will be sent to the student's university email address. Absent exceptional circumstances, the University will attempt to provide a written response to a reasonable accommodation request within fourteen (14) business days of receiving the requested information and engaging in the interactive process with the student.
6. Students who need **additional accommodations** or advocacy, should register with the Student Accessibility Center. Please contact: Julie Donatini, Director, Student Accessibility Center at: jdonatin@ashland.edu, or call 419-289-5904.

DETERMINATION OF REASONABLENESS

The Student Accessibility Center may deny the requested accommodation if it is unreasonable. The Student Accessibility Center shall consult with Residence Life to determine if implementing the requested accommodation is reasonable. An accommodation is unreasonable if it: (1) imposes an undue financial and/or administrative burden; (2) fundamentally alters university housing policies; (3) poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others or would cause substantial property damage to the property of others, including University property; and/or (4) is otherwise unreasonable to the operation of the University. If the Student Accessibility Center determines a requested accommodation is necessary and is not unreasonable, the individual will be contacted, in writing, within seven (7) business days of its determination.

DENIAL OF ACCOMMODATION/APPEAL

If the Student Accessibility Center determines a requested accommodation is necessary but unreasonable, they will contact the individual, in writing, within seven (7) business days of its determination and engage in an interactive process with the individual to determine if there are alternative accommodations that might effectively meet the individual's disability-related needs. If the individual is unwilling to accept any alternative accommodation offered by the Student Accessibility Center or there are no alternative accommodations available, they will provide a written notification to the individual of the denial, the reasons for the denial, the right to appeal the decision, and the procedures for that appeals process. The notification shall be in writing and made within seven (7) business days of the notification from the individual of his/her unwillingness to accept any of the alternative accommodations offered or the determination that there are no alternative accommodations available. All appeals are reviewed by the VP for Student Affairs and Auxiliary Services, or designee. If the appeal is denied, VP for Student Affairs and Auxiliary Services, or designee, shall provide written notification of the denial to the individual and a written explanation with all of the reasons for the denial. An individual may also use the formal grievance procedure provided under the general University anti-discrimination policies.

ANNUAL SUBMISSION AND REVIEW OF HOUSING ACCOMMODATIONS

The Housing Accommodation Request must be submitted on an annual basis, or if there is a change in the accommodation requirement, unless otherwise determined by the Student Accessibility Center.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The Student Accessibility Center understands the nature of medical confidentiality and privacy laws, if a request for a housing accommodation is to be given full and appropriate consideration, then the above documentation is vital and the ability to contact the verifying professional may be essential. It is the responsibility of the student to notify their professional healthcare provider's office of the need for the above information and to provide that office with any required privacy release documentation. The Student Accessibility Center guarantees that a student's confidentiality will be upheld, and information shared as needed with the Housing Accommodation Review Team members. Documentation provided by the student as part of the Housing Accommodations Review process will be maintained in a confidential manner by the Student Accessibility Center. If a student chooses not to provide an item listed above or to provide no documentation, then the Student Accessibility Center may not be able to proceed with a review of the Housing Accommodation Request.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS:

- Students have the right to request a housing accommodation.
- Students have the right to have their request evaluated on a case-by-case basis and have their confidentiality upheld.
- Students are responsible for providing documentation in a timely manner as requested.
- Students requesting accommodations based on a mental health diagnosis will contact the University

Counseling Center and follow through with any recommendations.

- Students requesting accommodations based on a medical diagnosis, or mobility issue will notify the University Health Center and Safety Services to ensure a continuum of care, and attention during emergencies or routine safety alerts.
- Students experiencing any temporary disability due to accident or injury should notify Safety Services to ensure care and attention during emergencies or routine safety alerts.

Students will, at times, need to choose between an available reasonable housing accommodation and their social life, such as not being able to live with their class cohort, their friends, or in a desired residential building on campus. Preferences such as buildings, specific rooms, and roommates/suitemate preferences are not disability accommodations and are therefore vetted through the Housing Office.

SINGLE ROOM ACCOMMODATIONS:

If you are considering requesting a single room as a disability accommodation, please read the below information:

AU is committed to providing housing for as many students as possible, and to ensuring full access for every student who resides in the residence halls. Being eligible for a single room as a disability accommodation means that **a single room is required in order to provide you with equal access to the residence halls**. If you are considering requesting a single room as a disability accommodation, please take a moment to consider your request carefully and ask yourself whether this definition applies to you.

The SAC is happy to assess requests from any student who chooses to make one, and understands that there are access barriers that may qualify a student for a single room accommodation. However, every term, the SAC receives a number of requests from disabled and nondisabled students who would prefer a single room, would feel more comfortable in a single room, would have their symptoms lessened or treated by a single room, or feel that they would perform better academically if they lived in a single room. While it is valid and understandable to feel this way, these reasons are not the same as requiring a single room for equal access, and these types of requests may not be approved.

Because we know that sharing a room can be difficult, AU has several support systems available to students who struggle with sharing living space, including Housing staff support with roommate communication and boundaries, study areas to provide alternative spaces to work, and a team of mental health counselors available to all students for short-term services. Our support team is happy to help talk you through any concerns you have with sharing a room, direct you to appropriate resources to assist with your concerns, and/or craft a plan of action to address your concerns.

If you do choose to submit a disability accommodation request for a single room, please note that submitting documentation does not guarantee provision of a single room - it simply gives the SAC the information we need in order to fully assess your request. As with any accommodation request, we will engage in an interactive process with you to discuss your individual situation and needs and determine what accommodations are appropriate.

A single room is defined as a room with 1 set of furniture, typically a smaller-size room for one person. Double rooms with just one occupant will not be considered as single rooms through the housing accommodation process. Students with approved accommodations for single rooms will be assigned to a true single room, as there is space availability. If there is no availability of a true single room, students will be placed on a waitlist until a space that meets the accommodation opens up.

Students who are interested in a double room with just one occupant, should request a buyout through the Office of Residence Life, not as a part of the housing accommodation process. Buyouts have an additional cost associated and are granted as space is available.

Assigning a single room as a disability accommodation occurs when private living/sleeping space is necessary to remove barriers for the student to access and utilize college housing. A single room is a disability accommodation when a student's clinical history and professional documentation clearly provide a rationale explaining how the student's substantial limitations create a need for separate living/sleeping space as the only reasonable means for the student to access and utilize housing.

In general, the following diagnoses *may* be cause for single room housing accommodation:

- Disorders Involving Muscular Degeneration
- Immunodeficiency Disorders (or need for chronic medication which significantly impacts immune function)
- Sleep Disorders (a full sleep assessment *including* a sleep disorder lab study will be required)

In general, the following *are not typical* reasons to provide single room housing accommodations and will require specific and thorough third-party documentation:

- ADD/ADHD
- Arthritis
- Mental Health Disorders
- Irritable Bowel Disease
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Allergies or Asthma
- Eating Disorders
- Migraine Headaches
- Diabetes

RELEASE FROM THE ON-CAMPUS LIVING REQUIREMENT:

Exemptions to the housing policy and live-on requirement are only recommended in rare cases where all other reasonable accommodations are considered first. The Student Accessibility Center focuses on accommodations in the on-campus living environment.