



415 W. Main Street
Smethport, PA 16749
(814) 887-5563
Relay #: 711

MCKEAN COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

ASSISTANCE ANIMAL POLICY

It is the policy and intention of the McKean County Housing Authority (“MCHA”) to approve an Assistance Animal as a reasonable accommodation for an MCHA client with a disability (“Family Member With a Disability”) and needs the assistance of an animal in order to fully enjoy MCHA’s housing, services or programs. MCHA will approve animals that provide a service, as well as those who provide emotional support; MCHA treats both types of animals the same. *(Note: animals that HUD has determined PHAs should approve as “pets” that are beneficial for the elderly or near-elderly are not considered Assistance Animals, and are not subject to this policy).*

Since MCHA does not consider Assistance Animals “pets,” with the exception of behavioral and administrative requirements, Assistance Animals generally are not subject to MCHA’s pet policies. Accordingly, the following limitations on pets are not applicable to Assistance Animals: access to common areas and management offices, pet deposit or pet fee, height or weight limitations, breed restrictions, restrictions on the number of animals permitted in a unit (in rare occasions where there is 3rd party verification of need, a household may be entitled to keep multiple Assistance Animals, but each animal must serve a different purpose (e.g., one for service and one for emotional support)).

The following types of animals are eligible to be Assistance Animals:

- Neutered or spayed dogs
- Domesticated and trained miniature ponies
- Neutered or spayed cats
- Fish that humanely can live within a 20-gallon fish tank
- Typical household birds
- Small or potbellied pigs with an adult weight not to exceed 25 pounds
- Neutered or spayed Guinea pigs



- Neutered or spayed hamsters
- Neutered or spayed ferrets
- Small turtles weighing less than one pound
- Other small, common household pets traditionally kept in the home for pleasure rather than for commercial or other purposes

The following types of animals are not eligible to be Assistance Animals and will not be approved:

- Undomesticated animals
- Snakes and other reptiles, with the exception of small turtles weighing less than one pound
- Exotic animals, such as lions and tigers
- Deer, raccoons, rats, mice, and other wild animals typically found living wild in the outdoors
- Animals that have not been neutered or spayed
- Monkeys or other primates

Individuals seeking an Assistance Animal will be required to verify, through a knowledgeable, licensed third-party professional, that they have a disability and that there is a medical need for the Assistance Animal in order for them to fully enjoy MCHA's housing, services and/or programs. The verifier should describe the specific benefits and/or services that the Assistance Animal should be able to provide to the individual with disabilities, and the family must certify that the specific animal is capable of providing the required assistance. MCHA has the right to request that the owner demonstrate the animal's abilities as a condition of approval or continued approval of that animal. Verifications will be required at each regular re-examination.

Additionally, individuals seeking an Assistance Animal will be required to verify, through a knowledgeable, licensed third-party veterinarian's certification, that the proposed animal is in good physical, mental, and emotional health for an animal of its breed and age, is up to date on recommended immunizations, and is

capable of performing the necessary assistance verified by the third-party verifier, among other certifications. MCHA has an approved form titled

As a condition to approval of an Assistance Animal, MCHA will require the head of household and family member needing the Assistance Animal to sign an Assistance Animal agreement and lease addendum. MCHA has the right to withdraw approval of Assistance Animals who do not conform to this policy or the Assistance Animal Agreement.

MCHA may withdraw its approval for an Assistance Animal under the following circumstances:

- The Family Member With a Disability no longer desires the animal and asks MCHA to withdraw approval
- The animal or a household member violates the Assistance Animal Agreement
- The animal is aggressive, violent or otherwise constitutes a direct threat to the health, safety, or well-being of a person or other animal on two (2) documented occasions. After the first occasion, the 504 Coordinator will send written notice to the family documenting the incident and advising that, if the animal is involved in another incident, approval will be withdrawn.
- MCHA has the right to immediately withdraw approval of an assistance animal and require that it leave MCHA premises immediately when the health and safety of people or other animals is seriously at risk
- Other circumstances warranting withdrawal of approval

MCHA will require the Head of Household and/or Family Member With a Disability (both are responsible) to pay for all damage to the unit, common areas, or elsewhere on MCHA property, caused by the Assistance Animal, or in using the Assistance Animal, above ordinary wear and tear.

The family seeking the Assistance Animal must demonstrate that they have the present and continuing ability and financial resources to acquire, maintain, feed, groom, exercise, and otherwise support the Assistance Animal, including providing standard veterinary care.

MCHA's general Reasonable Accommodations/Modifications Policy (Form RA-1) generally applies to this policy, and is fully incorporated herein by reference.

A Head of Household has the right to dispute MCHA's actions with regard to their request, the withdrawal of approval for a specific Assistance Animal, or other Assistance Animal-related action in accordance with MCHA's administrative review policy.

