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Bournemouth University Accommodation Bookings Policy and Procedures

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

1.1 These policy and procedures are for Bournemouth University (BU) staff and students*.

**In this policy we use the term “student” to refer to individuals who (depending on the context) have applied to or been offered a place to study at BU*

1.2 These policy and procedures provide guidance for those involved in the delivery of BU accommodation, for staff who advise students on accommodation options and for students wishing to apply for BU accommodation.

1.3 These policy and procedures apply to BU accommodation including residences owned and/or managed by BU and residences which are managed by a third party with which BU has a formal agreement. See Appendix 1 for a breakdown of properties and management/lease arrangements.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Residential Services is responsible for the maintenance of the StarRez booking system in accordance with the policies and procedures laid out in the document.

2.2 Marketing & Communications is responsible for providing information to prospective students based on the information provided in these policies and procedures.

3. LINKS TO OTHER BU DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 [Data Protection Policy for Staff and BU Representatives](#)
- [3A Standard Admissions Regulations: Undergraduate Programmes](#)
- [3A Standard Admissions Regulations: Taught Postgraduate & Graduate Certificate/Diploma Programmes](#)
- [3A Standard Admissions Regulations: Postgraduate Research Degrees](#)
- [3B Recruitment, Selection and Admission \(Postgraduate Research Degrees\): Policy and Procedure](#)
- [3B Recruitment, Selection and Admission \(Taught Programmes\): Policy and Procedure](#)
- [3D Fraudulent Applications: Procedure](#)

[3E Criminal Convictions Procedure](#)

[3M Admission and Support for Students Under 18: Policy and Procedure](#)

[Under 18s Accommodation Policy](#)

[Safeguarding Policy](#)

Assistance Dog Policy (see Appendix 2)

4. GUARANTEE POLICY

BU guarantee a room in BU accommodation to all students who meet the following criteria*:

- It is the students first year of study at BU
- Student will be studying on BU Talbot or Lansdowne campus**
- Student submits their application for study by the published deadline (see table 1 below)

Table 1

		UCAS application submitted by:	Student status UF (Unconditional Firm) by:
Level and year of study of study	UG (Home/EU) - September 2021	Midnight, 30th June 2021	8am, 24th August 2021
	UG (International) - September 2021	Midnight, 30th June 2021	9am 31st August 2021
	PG - September 2021	N/A	8am, 24th August 2021
	All - January 2021	N/A	9am, 21st December 2020
	All – January 2022	N/A	9am, 20th December 2021

- Student has accepted BU as their first choice (i.e. student status is showing as UF) by the published deadline (see table 1 above)***
- Student completes the online booking process within the instructions and time frames as set out in emails by BU.

** Some exceptions, additional considerations or separate allocation processes can apply:*

- *Students who are Care Leavers (see 5.)*
- *Students with an established medical condition or disability that impacts upon their living arrangements (see 6.)*
- *Students with relevant criminal convictions, depending on the outcome of BU risk assessment (see 7.)*
- *Students with dependants (see 8.)*

*** students on a nursing or midwifery course should be aware that it may be more appropriate to seek hospital or private rented accommodation close to their placement locality as they will be subject to NHS shift working patterns whilst on placement and will avoid unnecessary travel. They will be advised of this by BU's Academic Services team during the academic admissions processes as well as emailed with alternative options by Marketing and Communications once the student status is UF or CF.*

**** if a student does not meet the required UCAS points for entry on to their chosen course of study at BU, is not released back to UCAS Clearing but then accepts an alternative course offered by BU by 5pm on Thursday 15th August 2018, their accommodation guarantee will be upheld.*

5. CARE LEAVERS

Students who have been in care for more than 3 months in the last 5 years are guaranteed* BU accommodation for the full period of their studies. The deadline for students in this category to inform Residential Services of their need for accommodation is 8am on 6th September 2021. Accommodation is not guaranteed for applications received after this date.

** If sections 6, 7 or 8 of this policy apply to the student's circumstances the considerations set out in one or more of those sections (as relevant) will take priority over the guarantee set out in this section 5.*

6. MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND DISABILITIES

- 6.1 BU is committed to supporting the needs of all students as far as reasonably practicable. We endeavour to accommodate all students falling within the Guarantee Policy. However, where a student declares a medical condition, disability or has an accredited Assistance Dog, which means that they need specialist or modified accommodation, or require the allocation of a specific type of room, this cannot be guaranteed, and if suitable accommodation can be provided it may not be possible to meet the student's preference as to location or accommodation provider. For such students a full needs assessment will be conducted by BU in conjunction with its accommodation partners where relevant. Taking into account third party advice or recommendations as appropriate (e.g. from a consultant) BU will determine whether suitable accommodation is or can be made available (this might be existing accommodation in its current form or subject to reasonable adjustments made to meet the student's needs). If the assessment finds that BU and/or its accommodation partners is unable to accommodate the student, because reasonable adjustments cannot be made or the student's needs are such that they cannot reasonably and safely be met, BU will provide the student with information on seeking accommodation in the private sector.

Where a student declares a medical condition or disability that does not require physical adaptations to accommodation but which may indicate the existence of an ongoing risk to the student (or others) (e.g. epilepsy) BU may carry out a risk

assessment to ensure that appropriate support will be in place for the student to manage these risks in the accommodation context.

- 6.2 Where Covid-19 restrictions are in place we will also ask applicants to declare if they are Clinically Vulnerable (CV) or Extremely Clinically Vulnerable (ECV). Where an applicant is CV they will be able to carry on with the booking process but if ECV then BU may carry out a risk assessment to ensure that appropriate support will be in place for the student to manage these risks in the accommodation context.

7. CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

- 7.1 This section applies to any student who has disclosed a relevant criminal conviction as required under [BU policy 3E: Criminal Convictions Procedure](#).

- 7.2 Students will not be asked to make a separate declaration of criminal convictions as part of the accommodation booking process. Under policy 3E, where a student declares a criminal conviction BU carries out an assessment of any risks which may arise within the University environment from the declared conviction. This includes consideration by the relevant BU Panel of any potential risks arising from the student living in BU accommodation. The outcome of that risk assessment will determine whether and how the student can proceed to exercise their right to guaranteed accommodation under this policy as follows:

- 7.2.1 If the risk assessment determines that there are no risks which justify an impact on the student's right to guaranteed accommodation or restriction of the choice of BU accommodation, the student will be informed accordingly by the Panel. The student's guarantee of accommodation is not affected and they will be able to proceed with accommodation booking through the standard route. No information about the conviction or the risk assessment will be passed to Residential Services;
- 7.2.2 If the risk assessment determines that there are risks arising from the student living in BU accommodation but these could be adequately controlled through risk control measures put in place around the student's booking of accommodation, the Panel will specify the required risk control measures. These may mean restricting the student's choice of BU accommodation or putting other conditions around their booking. In these circumstances the student will be informed of the proposed control measures. If the student wishes to proceed to take up their right to guaranteed accommodation on this basis, BU will provide the student with the information and assistance required to make their booking in accordance with the risk control measures. Information about the required risk controls will be passed to Residential Services for this purpose, and information about the conviction and the risk controls will also be shared with a relevant third party accommodation provider of accommodation booked by the student if and to the extent necessary to enable the risk controls to be put in place. If the student does not wish to proceed to take up their right to guaranteed accommodation on this basis, Residential Services will be asked to provide the student with information on seeking accommodation in the private sector but will not be given any information about the declared conviction or the risk assessment; or
- 7.2.3 If the risk assessment determines that the risks arising from the student living in BU accommodation cannot be adequately controlled, taking into account all reasonably available risk control measures, BU will remove the student's right to guaranteed

accommodation. Residential Services will be asked to provide the student with information on seeking accommodation in the private sector but will not be given any information about the declared conviction or the risk assessment.

8. DEPENDANT(S) AND THIRD PARTIES

The Guarantee Policy covers the individual student only. BU cannot accommodate dependants unless it is in accommodation that has been allocated by BU for such use. This type of accommodation is very limited and cannot be guaranteed to be available. If the student cannot be accommodated within BU managed accommodation BU will provide the student with information on seeking accommodation in the private sector. BU does not accommodate third parties who are not dependants.

For the purpose of this policy:

A 'dependant' is a spouse, civil partner, child or parent of the student, or a person living in a single household with the student (excluding tenants, lodgers, boarders and employees).

A 'single household' is formed by: a family; single person; and employer and certain domestic employees (who provide a service and do not pay rent / other consideration); a carer and the person receiving the care; and, a foster parent /foster child.

A 'family' comprises a couple (whether or not married, and including same sex couples), a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child, grandchild or step child, cousin, niece or nephew or aunt or uncle. Half-blood is treated as a relationship of full blood.

9. BOOKING PROCESS

- 9.1 When the booking cycle opens all students who have accepted a conditional (CF) or unconditional (UF) offer will be able to complete stage 1 of the booking process. This allows them to register for their accommodation guarantee for BU managed accommodation and to confirm some personal information about themselves.

At this stage of the process students will also be asked to declare whether they have any medical needs or disabilities that might impact on their accommodation options, including, in the event that Covid-19 restrictions are in place, asking if the applicants is CV or ECV (see 6.) or have dependants or other third parties (see 8.). As explained above, students declaring any of these will not be able to proceed through the process as described below until a needs assessment has been carried out. At this stage, BU will contact the student to discuss their individual circumstances for the purposes of an appropriate needs or risk assessment.

- 9.2 Once rooms are made available for booking all students who hold an unconditional offer (student status of UF) will be contacted and invited to complete the booking process (Stage 2). They will be required to log into the system, self-select any available room, sign the accommodation contract and make the required payment to confirm the booking.
- 9.3 Students booking a room with a BU Licence agreement will need to make the required payment during Stage 2 of the booking process. This completes the booking process for these students.
- 9.4 Students booking a room for all other properties will have their details passed to the BU's third party accommodation provider at the end of Stage 2. The third party provider will then contact the student with instructions on how to complete their booking.

10. PAYMENTS

- 10.1 Students with a BU Licence agreement will be required to pay their first rent payment (£250) at the time of completing their booking
- 10.2 Students for all other properties will agree payment arrangements with their accommodation provider following the completion of Stage 2.
- 10.3 In all cases rents are collected in three instalments. The instalment dates for these payments are in September/October, January and April/May (to coincide with student loan payment dates).

11. ROOM RELEASES

- 11.1 September 2021 – release of rooms will be from 8th March 2021.
- 11.2 January 2021 – release of rooms will be planned and staged through October and December 2020
- 11.3 January 2022 - release of rooms will be planned and staged through October and December 2021
- 11.4 Releases will generally contain room types from across all accommodation options and will not be restricted to certain buildings. The exception will be when there is a PG only intake when only PG rooms will be released.
- 11.5 A proportion of cluster flats within Halls and BU Managed Housing will be reserved for single sex accommodation.

12. SELF-SELECTION

- 12.1 Students and students self-select rooms and will be able to choose from all rooms available at the time of booking.

13. ROOMS ALLOCATED BY BU

BU will only allocate rooms for students (i.e. self-selection will not apply) under the following circumstances:

- If the student or student has a specific need that has been identified through the registration stage, e.g. a medical condition or access requirement and an assessment of needs has shown that they need specific accommodation (see section 6).
- If this forms part of a risk control measure in relation to a relevant criminal conviction (see section 7).
- If the student has requested family accommodation (see section 8.)
- If the student or student is under the age of 18.

14. ROOM RESTRICTIONS

Normally students will be able to choose from any available accommodation option. To assist decision making, comprehensive information about each accommodation option will be provided on the accommodation booking portal and/or BU webpages.

15. BUS PASSES

15.1 All Accommodation costs will be quoted including a bus pass. Students will however have the option to 'opt-out' of the purchase at the booking stage through to the end of their first term of study.

16. ResLifeBU

16.1 All Accommodation costs will be quoted including a sum which is a fee for the ResLifeBU programme. This programme and the associated fee is an integrated part of the accommodation contract and it is not possible for students to opt-out.

17. PERSONAL INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION

17.1 BU will hold and process all personal information in accordance with the data protection legislation. Currently this means the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK legislation which implements and supplements the GDPR.

17.2 Personal information collected during the booking process will be used by BU and third party accommodation providers for the purpose of administering applications for accommodation in accordance with this policy. As described above, this includes the use and sharing of information about medical conditions and disabilities for the purposes of assessing and responding to students' needs. It also includes the use and sharing of information about relevant criminal convictions and any associated BU risk assessment as described in section 7 above. The process set out in section 7 is intended to ensure that information about declared relevant criminal convictions is only processed in respect of accommodation to the minimum extent necessary for safeguarding purposes.

17.3 Where the student has chosen to apply for BU-owned/managed accommodation, personal information collected during the booking process will also be used by BU for the day-to-day management of that accommodation.

17.4 Where an student has applied for externally-owned/managed accommodation, the student's information will be shared with the relevant third party accommodation provider(s). This includes the student's: name, date of birth, home address, email, telephone number and, when relevant, any disclosed medical or disability information and information about any relevant criminal conviction and the associated risk assessment by BU as provided for in section 7. Information shared with a third-party provider will be used by them to administer the application for accommodation and (where the application is granted) subsequently for the day-to-day management of that accommodation.

17.5 For students over the age of 18, information held by BU and third-party accommodation providers will not be shared with other third parties or for purposes other than those set out in this policy, except in very limited circumstances where either BU or a third party provider determines that this is necessary to safeguard the welfare of individuals. After the booking process is completed, BU and third-party accommodation providers will share additional information about students living in third-party provider accommodation with each other in very limited circumstances where this is assessed as necessary to safeguard the welfare of individuals.

17.6 During the booking process, students can provide some additional information about themselves, such as [their course of study, hobbies and personal interests]. This information (not linked to names or other identifying details) will be made

available to other students during the self-selection booking process to help students choose their flatmates.

General

18. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Management of BU Allocated Accommodation

Appendix 2 Assistance Dog Policy

Appendix 1 - Management of BU Allocated Accommodation

Building	Number of beds available for students	Owned by	Model	Rent collected by	Student holds accommodation agreement with
Chesil House	210	CLV	Nominations agreement	CLV	CLV
Corfe House	308	Student Roost	Nominations agreement	Student Roost	Student Roost
Cranborne House	497	CLV	Nominations agreement	CLV	CLV
Dorchester House	590	iQ Students	Lease agreement	BU	BU
Lyme Regis	400	CLV	Nominations agreement	CLV	CLV
Purbeck House	518	UNITE	Nominations agreement	UNITE	UNITE
Okeford House	94	CLV	Nominations agreement	CLV	CLV
Student Village	270	TVT	Lease agreement	BU	BU
St John's Road	28 (January arrivals only)	Private Landlord (Taylor Group Properties)	Lease agreement	BU	BU
Unilet	21	Private Landlords	Bournemouth private rental market rates	BU	BU
Bailey Point	550	The Student Housing Company	Nominations agreement	The Student Housing Company	The Student Housing Company

Appendix 2 - Assistance Dog Policy

Bournemouth University Guidance on Assistance Dogs

1. Introduction

1.1. This guidance seeks to address specific issues relating to assistance dogs while on the University campus. It is also intended to raise awareness for students, staff and visitors of the issues relating to assistance dogs.

1.2. As a general premise, BU prohibits individuals from bringing animals inside any University owned, leased or controlled buildings, vehicles or structures.

1.3. However, the University recognises that a dog kept and used by a disabled person (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) wholly or mainly for the purpose of assisting that person to carry out day to day activities (an “**Assistance Dog**”), will require access to the University’s estate, relevant buildings and University student accommodation.

1.4. This guidance aims to outline:

- The arrangements made to provide a welcoming and safe environment for assistance dogs and their owners.
- The roles and responsibilities within the University in relation to assistance dogs.
- The responsibilities of the owners of assistance dogs on University property.
- A process for dealing with issues and complaints if they arise.

2. Assistance Dogs

2.1. Assistance Dogs are trained by members of Assistance Dogs (UK)

(<http://www.assistedogs.org.uk/>) or by an equivalent organisation in another country.

2.2. Assistance Dogs (UK) is a coalition of assistance dog organisations, individual members of which are listed below, and the assistance dogs are required to have:

- a formal identification in the form of branded jackets or lead slips.

- a yellow ID booklet from the Assistance Dogs (UK) member organisation. This ID book contains information about the assistance dog and its owner, and details of the training organisation who trained the assistance dog.

Assistance dog owners should therefore be in a position to evidence that their dogs are certificated assistance dogs.

See section 5 of this document for guidance on dogs that are yet to achieve Assistance Dog (UK) accreditation.

2.3. There are eight registered charities that form Assistance Dogs (UK). These are:

1. [Canine Partners](#)
2. [Dog A.I.D. \(Assistance in Disability\)](#)
3. [Dogs for Good](#)
4. [The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association](#)
5. [The Seeing Dogs Alliance](#)
6. [Hearing Dogs for Deaf People](#)
7. [Medical Detection Dogs](#)
8. [Support Dogs](#)

2.3. Assistance dogs have formal identification and are permitted to accompany their owners at all times and in all places within the United Kingdom (unless there is a genuine health and safety risk).

2.4. Please note that assistance dogs are highly trained working dogs, performing tasks to assist disabled persons.

- Guide Dogs assist people who are blind or visually impaired.
- Hearing Dogs assist people who are deaf or hearing impaired.
- Support Dogs/Dogs for people with disabilities can be trained to do many other tasks, which their owner may find difficult or impossible for example:
 - Opening and closing doors.
 - Calling an ambulance.
 - Picking up objects.

- Assisting with dressing and undressing.
- Accompanying their owner whilst shopping etc.
- Acting as a physical support.
- Raising the alarm.
- Operating control buttons.
- Switching lights on and off.
- Carrying items.
- Loading and unloading the washing machine.
- Fetching the telephone and other items.

3. Assistance Dogs on University premises

3.1. Assistance dogs are permitted to access all BU premises under the control of their handlers (or where necessary in order to control the assistance dog for a short period of time, someone other than the handler), who may be students, staff members or visitors to the University.

Details of how to interact with an assistance dog can be found in Appendix A of this guidance document.

3.2. When assistance dogs are in University properties, their owners must comply with the following guidelines:

3.2.1. Information

Assistance dog owners shall provide information about the animal and its tasks/duties, if reasonably requested by University staff.

3.2.2. Identification

Assistance dog owners must ensure that their assistance dogs are clearly identifiable by the use of special collars, harnesses and/or ID tags when on duty. BU approved dogs will also be issued with a BU ID card.

3.2.3. Insurance

Assistance dog owners are responsible for ensuring that their assistance dogs are covered by a level of public liability insurance that must include the workplace and/or place of study.

3.2.4. Access restrictions

Assistance dog owners must respect access restrictions established by the University on grounds of health and safety. Assistance dog owners must ensure that assistance dogs do not enter staff and students' privately assigned spaces, such as bedrooms and flats within residences, without permission.

Assistance dog owners must ensure that there is a safe and suitable emergency evacuation plan in place for their dog and themselves. Emergency responders will be trained to make every effort to ensure that assistance dogs are kept with their owners in an emergency evacuation situation, but the responder's priority should be towards the safety of the owner.

3.2.5. Animal misbehaviour

Preventing and correcting assistance dog misbehaviour is the owner's responsibility. Assistance dog owners must make sure that their assistance dogs do not cause harm or injury to others and damage to University property.

3.2.6. Cleanliness

Registered blind people are not required to clean up after their assistance dogs but they are expected to have received the appropriate training to avoid dog waste on campus. Assistance dog owners must take responsibility for the clean-up of the animal's waste, consistent with reasonable capacity. Assistance dog owners shall use reasonable endeavours to use the designated 'spending' (toileting) areas identified by the University.

In order to support assistance dog owners who are students or staff, the University will provide toileting facilities in an appropriate location for the assistance dog owner, as soon as is practical, once a need has been identified and communicated to the University.

In the unlikely event that the assistance dog does 'spend' outside of these designated areas, the assistance dog owner must report this to the **Estates Helpdesk** (provide link) who will make arrangements for the area to be cleaned and sanitised.

3.2.7. Animal care and supervision

Animal care is primarily the assistance dog owner's responsibility. The owner ensures regular health checks, vaccination and an adequate standard of grooming of the assistance dog. Assistance dog owners must ensure the assistance dog has its requirements in relation to feeding, watering and toileting fully met.

Owners must ensure that assistance dogs are kept on a lead at all times when walking around the University's estate or are safely restrained when unsupervised for short periods of time.

The University is not responsible for the loss, ill health or death of an assistance dog.

3.8. Animal training

Assistance dog owners are responsible for any additional training needs for their assistance dogs and for the correct and safe performance of their duties.

4. Assistance Dogs from other countries

There may be occasions where students, staff members or visitors to the University from other countries request that their assistance dog accompanies them. As long as evidence can be provided that the dog has been trained to an equivalent standard as of the member organisations of Assistance Dogs (UK), this is acceptable.

5. Therapy and Support Animals

Therapy and support animals are different to assistance dogs and will only be permitted in University premises on a case-by-case basis, with the prior written agreement of the University.

The agreement process will include line manager, health, safety and Estates considerations and will be made on behalf of the Chief Operating Officer.

6. Pets

This policy deals explicitly with assistance dogs, and not pets. (see sections 1.2 and 7.3)

7. Residential accommodation

7.1 Accommodation guarantee

BU is committed to supporting the needs of all students as far as reasonably practicable. BU endeavours to accommodate all students falling within the [BU Guarantee Policy](#). However, where a student declares they require an assistance dog, which means that they need specialist or modified accommodation, or require the allocation of a specific type of room, this cannot be guaranteed, and if suitable accommodation can be provided it may not be possible to meet the student's preference as to location or accommodation provider. For such students a full needs assessment will be conducted by BU in conjunction with its accommodation partners where relevant. Taking into account third party advice or recommendations as appropriate (e.g. from a consultant) BU will determine whether suitable accommodation is or can be made available (this might be existing accommodation in its current form or subject to reasonable adjustments made to meet the student's needs). If the assessment finds that BU and/or its accommodation partners is unable to accommodate the student, because reasonable adjustments cannot be made or the student's and dog's needs are such that they cannot reasonably and safely be met, BU will provide the student with information on seeking accommodation in the private sector.

7.2 Terms and Conditions of Residence

Once in residence, all other relevant requirements contained within this policy, along with any other policies or requirements from the relevant accommodation operator apply to the student and their assistance dog.

7.3 Therapy and Support Animals

Therapy and support are different to assistance dogs and will only be permitted in residential accommodation on a case-by-case basis, with the prior written agreement of the University

and/or relevant accommodation operator. The agreement process will include BU's Residential Services Manager, Health & Safety Adviser and/or equivalent accommodation operator personnel.

7.3 Pets

Pets are not permitted in any residential accommodation.

7.4 ResLifeBU Dogs

At times throughout the year, ResLifeBU allow designated dogs on to campus and in to residential accommodation for use in student related activities, e.g. exam de-stress events. These events are indemnified under BU insurances, held on specific dates, are time bound and subject to the BU risk assessment process. The dogs used are required to be up to date with their vaccinations and records to be held by BU Residential Services.

8. Conflict Situations

8.1. Removal of Assistance Dog

The University reserves the right to remove or bar entry to an assistance dog when it poses a direct threat to the health & safety of others. Unresolved animal misbehaviour may also provide grounds for removal, after all reasonable measures have been taken to address this.

8.2. Damage

Assistance dog owners are responsible for any damage to persons or University property.

8.3. Restricted access

The University may restrict access of assistance dogs to certain areas for health and safety reasons. Restricted areas may include research laboratories, medical facilities, areas where protective clothing is required, boiler rooms, etc. Applications for exceptions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

8.4. Conflicting health issues and/or disabilities

Where an assistance dog poses adverse health risk to another person (staff or student), the University will seek medical documentation from the affected party/parties to determine suitable alternative and equitable arrangements for either or both parties.

8.5. Religious or cultural conflicts

Religious or cultural beliefs cannot be used to prohibit access to assistance dogs and their owners.

8.6. Complaints

Any issues in relation to assistance dogs on University premises that cannot be resolved informally should be raised in accordance with the University's complaints handling procedure.

9. Review

This draft guidance has been implemented as a pilot for one year from August 2018 and is currently going through the final stages of review and approval as part of our commitment to continuous improvement and to enable the University to fully evaluate its impact and consider any changes in legislation prior to full implementation.

July 2019

Linking documentation

- [Assistance Dogs – a guide for all businesses](#)
- [A guide for welcoming customers with assistance dogs](#)

Appendix A

Tips for Interacting with assistance dogs:

DO speak to the owner/handler rather than the dog.

The assistance dog and the handler are a team. If you want to talk to them, always speak to the person first rather than automatically approaching the dog. Remember, the animal is working, and the human's life could depend on the dog staying focused on the job.

DON'T touch the dog without asking permission first.

Touching or petting a working dog is a distraction and may prevent them from tending to the human partner. The dog may be in the process of completing a command or direction given by the human, and you don't want to interfere.

Fortunately, most assistance dogs are trained to stay in work mode until they receive a release command from their handler. That's why many assistance dogs are able to ignore outside influences.

DON'T offer food to an assistance dog.

Many – not all – assistance dogs are on strict, healthy diets to keep their working lives long, and they may also have allergies that you are not aware of. It can also break the dog's training if they learn that they get food in a public place.

DO treat the owner/handler with sensitivity and respect.

Asking an assistance dog's handler personal questions about his or her disability is out of bounds. It's disrespectful and an intrusion of privacy. Assume the assistance dog 'team' can handle things themselves. If you sense they could use your help, ask first. And don't take it personally if your offer is rejected, as there's usually a good reason.

DON'T assume a napping assistance dog is off duty.

All dogs nap, including assistance dogs. When their handler is sitting or standing for some length of time, it's perfectly natural and appropriate for an assistance dog to sleep. The dog is still technically at work, however, so all other dos and don'ts remain in effect.

DO inform the handler if an assistance dog approaches you.

If an assistance dog approaches you, sniffs or nudges you, etc., politely let the handler know. Resist the urge to respond to the dog — the handler will correct the dog.