



## **HOUSING ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **Overview**

Jackson State University (JSU) is committed to achieving maximal access and equal opportunity for all qualified students, including those with disabilities. These guidelines are provided so that JSU can respond appropriately to the individual needs of students with disabilities. The learning environment and residential living are central to the JSU experience. It should be noted that living within the community, and learning to share space and be considerate of others is a vital part of that learning.

### **The Law**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (Amended 2008), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Fair Housing Act explicitly prohibit discrimination in housing and housing-related transactions because of disability. As such, educational housing programs are subject to federal regulations and are obligated to ensure equal access to housing programs for qualified students with disabilities.

### **Policy**

At Jackson State University, the Office Accessible Education & Resource Center (AERC) is responsible for reviewing all requests for accommodations. Accommodations in campus-owned housing may be approved on a case-by-case basis for students who demonstrate a significant need for these accommodations because of the severe impact of a diagnosed disability. As with all accommodations, housing accommodations are very individualized in nature and must be directly related to the impact of a student's diagnosed disorder.

Jackson State University reserves the right to determine eligibility for services based on the nature of the diagnosed disorder, the seriousness of the impact of the diagnosed

disorder, and the reasonableness, feasibility and availability of the requested accommodation.

Students requesting housing accommodations must submit supporting medical/psychological documentation and complete the approval process to become registered with the the Office Accessible Education & Resource Center (AERC). All documentation submitted will receive confidential review by AERC.

Students must also first be eligible for university housing; this means enrollment in a housing eligible program, school approval, and status as a full-time student. Students must follow general housing procedures, should be aware of published procedures and deadlines for general housing requests, and should consult with the Department of Housing and Residential Life for more information.

If reasonable accommodations cannot be immediately satisfied due to capacity/facility design/availability etc., AERC will meet with the student to share this information and work with the student to resolve this issue. Student will be required to renew accommodations request on a yearly basis.

Roommates will be assigned to students approved for housing accommodations in the same manner as other residential students. Rental rates for students with approved housing accommodations shall be set at the same rate as other students except in the situations as may be determined by AERC and the Housing Department.

Students requesting housing accommodations are encouraged to submit their request and supporting documentation to AERC no later than the following dates:

**Summer Session**

May 1

**Fall Semester**

July 15

**Spring Semester**

December 1

*Housing accommodation requests received by AERC after the above dates will be accepted and considered; however, AERC reviews all accommodation requests in the order in which they are received. The review of accommodation requests can be a time-consuming process and AERC cannot guarantee that housing accommodation requests received after the above dates will be reviewed and approved in time to meet general housing deadlines.*

## **Examples of Housing Accommodations**

- Wheelchair accessible unit
- Semi-private bathroom
- Private bathroom
- First floor room
- Private room
- Service Animal
- Emotional Support Animal
- Braille signage

## **Important Information about Supporting Documentation**

Documentation should be:

1. Recent (within the last year of applying for housing).
2. Sufficient to establish a direct link between the underlying diagnosis and the requested housing accommodations.

The following documents **are not** considered effective forms of documentation if submitted alone:

1. Handwritten patient records or notes from patient charts
2. Prescription pad notes
3. Self-evaluation found on the internet or in any print publication
4. Research articles
5. Medication lists

Requests Generally NOT Considered Reasonable Accommodations:

1. Specific Building Requests- Students should generally not make building specific request, but instead request the accommodation needed. A building specific request generally is not considered a reasonable accommodation.
2. Any other reasonable accommodation up to the point that would result in an undue financial and administrative burden and/or constitute a fundamental alteration of the program.

## **Evaluation Criteria**

AERC evaluates requests for housing accommodations very carefully and will consider the following questions in our evaluation process:

### **Necessity of Request**

- Is the requested accommodation needed because of a diagnosed disorder or is it a preference?
- What, if any, permanent negative health impact may be experienced by the student if the request cannot be provided?
- Is the accommodation being requested an essential element of a treatment plan for the student's diagnosed disorder?
- If the request cannot be provided, would the impact of the student's condition be life threatening?
- What is the possible academic and/or social impact if the requested accommodation cannot be provided?
- If the accommodation cannot be provided, what is the likely impact on the student's level of comfort?

### **Timing of the Request**

- Was the request made with initial housing request?
- Was the request made before the deadline for housing requests for the semester I question?
- Was the request made as soon as possible after identifying the need? (Based on date of diagnosis, receipt of housing assignment, change in status, etc.)

### **Feasibility and Availability of the Request**

- Is the requested accommodation readily available within the current housing program?
- Can space be adapted to provide the requested configuration without creating a safety hazard (electrical load, emergency egress, etc.)?
- Are there alternative housing accommodations that may provide the same level of access if the original request cannot be provided?
- How does meeting this request impact housing commitments to other students?

### **Procedure for Requesting Housing Accommodations**

- Student must be admitted to the University before housing accommodation requests can be reviewed.
- Student must follow general student housing procedures requesting student housing, should remain aware of required housing deadlines, and should consult with the Department of Housing and Residential life for more information.
- Student must apply to AERC for housing accommodations, and other types of accommodations.

## **Accommodations Review/Communication of Housing Accommodation Decisions**

Requests for reasonable housing accommodations, along with supporting documentation, are reviewed by representation from AERC Staff, in consultation with the University Medical Staff. Students are typically notified of the decision via email to their JSU email address within 72 hours. The correspondence includes a decision regarding eligibility for each housing accommodation requested. Types of decisions include granting or denying a request in whole or in part, providing a reasonable accommodation that may differ from the precise request, and/or requesting further documentation or information to support a request. Decisions may be appealed and instructions on how to do so are included in the decision email.

All accommodation approvals are communicated to the JSU Department of Housing and Residential Life, which will contact the student through the housing assignment process regarding a specific assignment or assignment option that meet the approved accommodation(s).

Requests for accommodations may be submitted and will be evaluated at any time. However, requests received after the housing assignment process is already underway or has been completed, are subject to limited availability. Students approved for accommodations will be placed on a wait list by the Department of Housing and Residential Life. As noted above, receiving an approved accommodation does not guarantee a housing assignment, and students with disabilities are subject to the same generally applicable deadlines as all other students.

## **Appeal/Grievance Process**

If a student believes that he/she was unjustifiably denied a reasonable housing accommodation, the student should direct their concern to the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs or their designee. The student must provide, in writing, the nature of the concern and any other relevant information within five business days of receipt of the housing accommodation decision. The Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs or designee will review all pertinent information before rendering a decision.

## **Confidentiality**

The university has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality of disability-related documentation and may not release any part of the documentation without the student's informed and written consent, or written release from the diagnosing professional or agency except as allowed by law. AERC and the Department of Housing must receive written consent to discuss confidential information regarding a student's disability, accommodation and/or AERC file with parents.