## Sample Verification Letter

Printed on the Healthcare Provider's Letterhead

**(Part I)**

Date:

Dear Housing Provider:

I have been _____Name_____' s _____ [counselor, nurse, doctor, therapist, psychiatrist] since _____.

I am aware that the Fair Housing Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act define disability as:

1. A physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities, and/or
2. A record of having a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities, and/or
3. Being regarded as having a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of the person's major life activities.

Major life activity includes, but is not limited to: caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and/or working.

I affirm that_____Name_____has a disability which meets this legal definition.

**(Part II)**

_____Name_____has disabilities that REQUIRES *** a trained assistance animal (e.g., a dog named Toby)** that performs disability-related tasks.

It is NECESSARY _____Name_____be granted an accommodation for *** a trained assistance animal** in their housing as quickly as possible so _____Name_____ 's disabilities will be ameliorated, not exacerbated and/or continue to worsen.

Sincerely,
[Doctor, Nurse, Physician Assistant, Therapist/Counselor, Social Worker, Psychiatrist, Independent Living Specialist, etc.]

Healthcare Provider's Contact info

## Who is defined as a "Person with a Disability"?

Under the Fair Housing Act, a disability is defined as:

- A physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities
- A record of such an impairment, or,
- Being regarded as having such an impairment.

Under RCW 49.60, the Washington State Law Against Discrimination, (WLAD), disability is defined to include conditions that are temporary or permanent, common or uncommon, mitigated or unmitigated.

Northwest Fair Housing Alliance

If you think you have been discriminated against in a housing transaction, contact:

Northwest Fair Housing Alliance
35 W Main Ave. Suite 250
Spokane, WA 99201
509-325-2665
1-800-200– FAIR (3247)
Fax: 1-866-376-6308

NWFHA may be able to advise you
of your options and advocate for you.
Our services are free. Our office is accessible.

Federal Fair Housing Act

Trained Assistance Animals in Housing

# Guidance for People with Disabilities



NORTHWEST FAIR HOUSING ALLIANCE

(509) 325-2665
1-800-200-FAIR (3247)
www.nwfairhouse.org

## Reasonable Accommodation (RA):

a change, exception, or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice, or service that allows a person with a disability to use and enjoy housing, including common areas. Having a trained assistance animal in "no pets" housing is an example of RA.

## Trained Assistance Animals:

To be allowed as a reasonable accommodation, the animal must be needed to perform disability work or tasks for a disability.

People with a variety of visible and invisible (physical or mental) disabilities use trained assistance animals to: retrieve medications, signal seizures, alert to insulin need, respond to and alert a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, provide guidance and navigation for people who are blind, etc.



## Breed, Size, Weight, Species

You may request an accommodation related to your need for a trained assistance animal, and a housing provider may waive certain rules as an accommodation.

## Owner Responsibilities:

- Pick up after & properly dispose of animal's waste
- Control the animal at all times, usually this means w/ a leash
- Animal behavior: no lunging, jumping on, biting, nipping or excessive barking
- License, shots, registration as



## Troubleshooting: mitigations

- Feces / waste — a caregiver/friend/family can help pick up waste & dispose of it properly for the person with the disabilities
- Nipping / biting — use a muzzle when going in and out of the building or into common areas such as an elevator or laundry room
- Barking excessively — obedience and handling training
- Running loose—additional training for voice control and/or leash use at all times

**Damages:** The animal's owner is responsible for the trained assistance animal's damages and may be charged for repairs or replacement during or after tenancy

**The animal's owner's disability is to be considered:** 1) the person must have a disability; 2) a disability need/requirement for the animal must be established; and 3) the animal should be reasonable and should be trained to perform a specific disability related task.



## Requesting a Trained Assistance Animal

- A person with a disability, or a representative (*friend, family, advocacy organization*) can make the request. There is no specific form or format that must be used for requests.
- Requests can be made verbally. For clarity, ***it is highly recommended that requests be made in writing.*** Keep a copy.
- The request does not need to disclose the nature or severity of the person's disability, and housing providers cannot ask about these.
- It is necessary to show a need directly related to a disability.
- The person requesting a trained assistance animal may be asked to provide a **verification letter** from a health care provider or a reliable third party who knows about the individual's disability (example on back). Obvious, visible, or known disabilities **do not** require verification of the disability—but may require verification of the disability **related need** if not obvious or known.
- RA requests may be made anytime during a tenancy (application through termination/eviction).
- There is no limit to the number of RA's a person may request.
- HUD investigates complaints for failure to provide reasonable accommodation for trained assistance animals if the animal has been trained to perform work or perform tasks related to a disability.
- Alternatively, people may seek redress through a private action in federal or state court.