

**STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES**

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**Reasonable Accommodation Analysis for Housing Process Exemption at UCF**

**What is the purpose of the accommodation process?**

The purpose of the disability accommodation process is to ensure a student is not discriminated against solely on the basis of disability and has the same level of access to UCF as their nondisabled peers. The goal is equitable access and opportunity, not to facilitate a specific accommodation.

**How are reasonable accommodation decisions made relative to housing placements?**

UCF does not require students to live on campus. In the current housing environment, the majority of spaces are designated for incoming first-year students. Once all spaces are filled by incoming first-year students, a waitlist will be managed. Only a small percentage of housing spaces are allocated for returning and transfer students. With only a few exceptions, almost any student who enrolls at UCF is informed that housing is not required or guaranteed. Therefore, students should enroll at UCF with the expectation that earning a degree at UCF will naturally require living off campus for some or all their time at UCF. Students should prepare and plan for this likely reality well in advance of the next academic year by developing the strategies, skills, and access to resources to successfully live off-campus.

Any returning or transfer student can initially apply for a housing lottery process, which determines who will be awarded a space on campus for the following academic year. After the lottery results have been communicated, students can be placed in a waitlist pool and will be offered a spot should a housing space become available.

More information on the lottery and waitlist can be found here: <https://www.housing.ucf.edu/apply/returning/#options>

SAS currently considers housing accommodation requests for students who, because of a disability, seek a lottery exemption (for automatic placement in housing) during the open lottery period or who seek priority placement on the waitlist (with assignment should space become available).

SAS facilitates an interactive process to understand a student's academic and housing experiences. With this information, SAS determines if housing placement is necessary to ensure nondiscrimination and equitable access to the overall campus experience while acknowledging that on-campus living is not required.

We rely on the following information to make informed decisions:

* Student narrative/history as to why on-campus living may be necessary
* Third-party documentation from a qualified medical/health/counseling provider (with extent of documentation needed to vary by the situation)
* Consultation with other members of the campus community (as necessary)

**What is the role of third-party medical documentation in determining reasonable housing accommodations?**

Students benefit from providing SAS third-party documentation for two reasons:

1. To establish that a student has a disability.
2. To provide information to help us understand how and why living on campus may be reasonable, logical, and necessary to ensure nondiscrimination and equitable access relative to the disability. Furthermore, documentation is helpful when it can explain why living off campus may not be readily feasible.

Documentation that includes any of the following points, though not exhaustive in scope, may be helpful in our analysis:

* Explanation of how the functional limitations of a disability impact a specific campus experience based on housing location
* Objective/evaluative data with professional recommendations/analysis that suggest why living on campus as an accommodation is necessary for a student to have equitable access to the educational opportunities

Students are highly encouraged to provide documentation at the time of the housing accommodation request. It is recommended that providers respond to the questions listed in our Medical Provider Form for Housing Accommodations.

While third-party documentation may be sufficient to establish the presence of a disability, it 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 SAS/UCF to approve the accommodation as being reasonable.

**What factors are considered when determining if an accommodation is reasonable?**

When necessary, reasonable housing accommodations via the lottery or waitlist placement are facilitated when the accommodation would address all the following:

* Establishes meaningful access or an equal opportunity to 1) Fully engage and participate in the same activities, campus services, benefits and experiences offered to a person without a disability; 2) Utilize the same information shared with everyone; and 3) Have the same opportunity to achieve.
* Logically addresses the impacts of one’s disability relative to the barriers/challenges that would be present based on living location.
* Resolves matters that the student could not otherwise address through preparation, practice, counseling/coaching/professional guidance, adjustment to expectations and routines, or implementation of other strategies that any student who lives off campus must consider and incorporate to continue to be successful UCF students.

The SAS team utilizes a structured review process for each accommodation request. An appeal process is available for students who do not agree with the initial determination.

**When are housing accommodations not reasonable?**

UCF works with over 3,500 students every year with a wide variety of common and unique medical diagnoses. Most disabled students do not live on campus and demonstrate the ability to effectively establish daily practices to engage with the campus experience while commuting to campus via shuttle, car, or other transportation options. Therefore, a housing accommodation due to disability is generally not provided for any of the following reasons:

* Solely to ensure the student is successful at UCF (accommodations in higher education are to provide access, not success)
* To increase comfort by making it easier to manage an academic schedule (such as by not having to plan for a shuttle ride or commute time)
* To alleviate discomfort with living off campus (such as having to plan when to come to campus, where/when to eat, the number of daily trips needed to campus, etc.)
* To serve as an alternative to the student developing the skills, abilities, and practices necessary to effectively live off campus (through trial-and-error, counseling, life coaching, UCF resources, such as the Student Health Services Type I Diabetes resource or UCF Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, or other strategies)
* Concerns about living independently for the first time away from on-campus housing
* For UCF to serve as a student’s primary treatment or medical plan/resource
* For safety and/or perceived greater access to Student Health Services or UCF Police in the event of an emergency
* Due to limited transportation options
* Due to financial concerns (whether related to disability or not)