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Accessible Housing Policy

Baldwin Wallace University recognizes the importance of providing reasonable accommodations in its housing policies and practices where necessary for individuals with disabilities to fully participate in the University housing program. This policy explains the specific requirements and guidelines that govern requests for reasonable accommodation in University housing. **Baldwin Wallace University reserves the right to amend this policy at any time as circumstances require.**

Section I. Introduction and Background

The learning environment and residential living are central to the BW experience, particularly for students who are required to live in residence halls. It is important to note that living within the BW community, sharing space and being considerate of others is part of the learning experience. Requests for single rooms (as an accommodation) based solely on a desire to have a "quiet, undisturbed place to study" will not be granted.

Because of the shared facilities, resources and number of people living under one roof, it is not logical to assume that having a private room would provide for such quiet, distraction-free space to any appreciable degree beyond living in a standard double room.

Section II. Office Responsible for Accessible Housing Decisions

The Office of Accessible Education (OAE) is responsible for evaluating whether to grant or deny requests for reasonable accommodation in University housing. Individuals with documented disabilities who reside or intend to reside in University housing who believe they need a reasonable accommodation must follow the procedures below.

Section III. Procedure for Requesting Reasonable Accommodation in University Housing (Excludes Requests for Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals)

The following requirements govern requests for reasonable accommodation in University housing policies and practices:

1. Requesting a Housing Accommodation

- a. New/Incoming students (first-year and transfer) must complete the Online Application for Accommodations to request a reasonable accommodation. Please be sure to select the needed housing configuration or accommodations under "accessible housing."
- b. Current/Returning students (who **have** previously applied for academic or housing accommodations at BW) must complete the Accessible Housing Application for Returning Students.
- c. Current/Returning students (who **have not** previously applied for academic or housing accommodations at BW) must complete the Online Application for Accommodations.
- d. OAE will accept and consider requests for reasonable accommodation in University housing at any time, however, it is advisable to submit requests by the stated deadlines to ensure availability of requested room type. The student requesting a housing accommodation should complete the application and provide documentation as soon as practicably possible before moving into University housing. If the request for accommodation is made fewer than sixty (60) days before the individual intends to move into University housing, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to meet the individual's accommodation needs during the first semester or term of occupancy. As such, those requests will be held over until the following term, if appropriate.

- e. If the need for accommodation arises with an individual already residing in University housing, he/she should contact OAE and complete the Online Student Application as soon as practically possible. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to meet the accommodation needs during the semester or term in which the request was made. As such, those requests will be held over until the following term, if appropriate.

2. Accessible Housing Deadlines

- a. New and transfer students: May 1 (for fall), November 1 (for spring) and March 15 (for summer).
- b. Returning students (or those students that received accessible housing the previous academic year or are already registered with OAE): February 1 (for fall), November 1 (for spring) and March 15 (for summer).
- c. All students must complete and submit an Accessible Housing Application and provide updated documentation every year for which they intend to request the housing accommodation. Adherence to the stated deadlines is necessary to guarantee the availability of the requested accommodation. Requests submitted outside of the stated deadlines will be accepted and considered, but the availability of accessible rooms diminishes the further we get from the deadlines.

3. Accessible Housing Documentation

OAE requires current documentation of the disability and the disability-related need for any specific housing accommodation(s) being requested to evaluate if the reasonable accommodation is necessary to provide the individual with an equal opportunity to use University housing. The student requesting an accommodation must cooperate with OAE promptly, providing all information needed to determine whether the requested accommodation is necessary. **Submission of documentation does not guarantee approval of the requested accommodation(s).**

A. Obvious Disability

If the disability is obvious, but the need for accommodation is not obvious, the University may require that the individual designate an appropriate third-party professional who can verify that the requested accommodation is necessary.

B. Non-Obvious Disability Necessity

If the disability and necessity for the accommodation are not obvious, OAE will require the individual to complete the appropriate verification form and designate an appropriate third-party professional who can verify that the individual has a disability and that the requested accommodation is necessary.

C. Appropriate Third-Party Professional

An appropriate third-party professional is someone familiar with the individual's disability and the necessity for the requested accommodation. This person must be duly licensed or an otherwise properly credentialed professional who has undergone appropriate and comprehensive training, has relevant experience, and has no personal relationship with the individual. A good match between the credentials of the individual making the diagnosis and the condition is required (e.g., an orthopedic limitation might be documented by an orthopedist or by a physician, but not a licensed psychologist).

If the appropriate third party professional returns the verification form without sufficient information for the Office of Accessible Education to determine whether an accommodation is necessary, OAE will inform the student in writing of the verification's insufficiency and may request additional information, including speaking directly with the individual supplying the third-party verification.

D. Current & Comprehensive Documentation

To evaluate requests based on medical, psychological or disability related conditions accurately and equitably, Baldwin Wallace University will need current and comprehensive documentation.

Documentation consists of an evaluation by an appropriate professional that explains the current impact of the condition on the request.

1. Submission of documentation does not guarantee approval of the requested accommodations.
2. The cost of the documentation is the responsibility of the student. Accessible housing requests are evaluated carefully. To aid this process, corresponding documentation must include:
 - i. Documentation of the condition or need that is the basis of the request;
 - ii. A clear description of the desired housing configuration;
 - iii. An explanation of how the request explains the impact of the condition;
 - iv. An indication of the level of need for the recommended configuration (and the consequences of not receiving); and
 - v. Possible alternatives if the recommended configuration is not possible.
3. The general guidelines listed below were developed to assist students in working with their treating and diagnosing healthcare professional(s) to prepare the required information to evaluate the request, eligibility and need for academic accommodations. These seven elements were derived from the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD). For a complete description of the General Documentation Guidelines, please visit our website: www.bw.edu/accessible-education. Documentation MUST include the following:
 - i. Credentials of the evaluator(s).
 - ii. A diagnostic statement identifying the disability.
 - iii. A description of the diagnostic methodology used.
 - iv. A description of the current functional limitations.
 - v. A description of the expected progression or stability of the disability
 - vi. A description of current and past accommodations, services and medications.
 - vii. A recommendation for accommodations, adaptive devices, assistive services, compensatory strategies, and collateral support services.

The student's healthcare provider or diagnostician should complete the proper verification form based on the student's documented disability. Verification forms are located on our website at www.bw.edu-accessible-education.

4. Accessible Housing Determination of Reasonableness

OAE may deny the requested accommodation if it is unreasonable. An accommodation may be unreasonable if:

- a. It poses an undue financial or administrative burden;
- b. It fundamentally alters University housing policies;
- c. It poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others or would cause substantial property damage to the property of others, including University property; and
- d. It is otherwise unreasonable to the operation of the University.

5. Evaluation of Housing Requests

Housing assignments and the residential learning environment are integral parts of Baldwin Wallace University programs, particularly for freshmen. We evaluate all requests for need-based housing assignments carefully. Below is a summary of the factors considered when evaluating housing request:

a. The severity of the condition

1. Is the impact of the condition life-threatening if the request is not met?
2. Is there a negative health impact that may be permanent if the request is not met?
3. Is the request an integral component of a treatment plan for the condition in question?
4. What is the likely impact on academic performance if the request is not met?
5. What is the likely impact on social development if the request is not met?
6. What is the likely impact on the student's level of comfort if the request is not met?

b. The timing of the request

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

c. Feasibility & availability

1. Is space available that meets the student's needs?
2. Can space be adapted to provide the requested configuration without creating a safety hazard (electrical load, emergency egress, etc.)?
3. Are there other effective methods or housing configurations that would achieve similar benefits as the requested configuration?
4. How does meeting this request impact housing commitments to other students?

6. Accessible Housing Approval

If OAE determines that a requested housing accommodation is reasonable and necessary for the student to use and enjoy the residence hall, the student will be notified of the decision via email. That email will include instructions on next steps for the student. The student will be responsible for all follow-up with the Office of Residence Life.

7. Accessible Housing Denial & Appeal

If OAE determines that a requested accommodation is unnecessary and/or unreasonable, the student will be notified of the decision via email. The students can choose to provide new and supporting documentation for reconsideration.

- a. If OAE determines a requested accommodation is necessary but unreasonable, it will engage in an interactive process with the student to determine if there are alternative accommodations that might effectively meet the individual's disability-related needs.
- b. If the individual is unwilling to accept any alternative accommodation offered by OAE or there are no alternative accommodations available, OAE will provide a verbal explanation and written notification to the student of the denial, and the the reason(s) for the denial. The student reserves the right to grieve the decision through the University's grievance procedure.

8. Confidentiality & Recordkeeping

In processing requests for reasonable accommodations, OAE will take all steps required by federal, state and local law to protect the confidentiality of any information or documentation disclosed in connection with the requests.

Such measures may include limiting access to such information to individuals specifically designated to determine and implement requests for reasonable accommodations. Disclosure of information will be made only to the extent necessary to determine whether to grant the request, determine if the request is unreasonable and implement any request granted. All disability-related information, including the written request and accompanying documentation, is stored in a secure information management system to which only those designated individuals have access, except as otherwise required by law.

9. Non-retaliation Provision

BW will not retaliate against any individual because that individual has requested or received a reasonable accommodation in University housing.

Section IV. Air Conditioner Requests

OAE does not handle requests for air conditioning. Please contact the Office of Residence Life (reslife@bw.edu) for information about air conditioned residence halls and/or to submit an air conditioner request.

Section V. Emotional Support Animals in University Housing

OAE does not handle requests for Emotional Support Animals (ESAs). Please contact the Office of Residence Life (reslife@bw.edu) for information about ESAs in University Housing.

Section VI. Service Animals in University Housing

Please contact the Office of Residence Life (reslife@bw.edu) for information about Service Animals in University Housing. Requests are not required for Service Animals, however, it is advisable to notify OAE if the student will be accompanied by a Service Animal to provide notice to faculty and avoid confusion or conflict.

Please Note:

1. Requests for housing accommodations and updated documentation need to be submitted EACH academic year.
2. OAE *does not* honor housing requests for assignments in specific locations and or buildings. Specific room assignments are made by the Office of Residence Life.
3. The Office of Accessible Education (OAE) and Office of Residence Life staff work together to identify housing assignments that best meet individual needs.
4. To ensure the best opportunity for consideration, it is imperative that returning students submit the application and documentation by these deadlines: 2/1 for fall, 11/1, for spring, 3/15 for summer.
5. To ensure the best opportunity for consideration, it is imperative that new/incoming students submit the application and documentation by these deadlines: 5/1 for fall, 11/1 for spring, 3/15 for summer.