

## [Disability-related Housing Requests](#)

### **Procedure for Requesting Disability-related Housing Accommodations:**

A student with a disability requiring special housing accommodations due to his/her physical, psychological, or health-related impairments may request special accommodations through Niagara's Disability Services Office. Requests for accommodations (e.g., single room, accessible room/bathroom, residency exemptions, and service animals) must be supported by documentation from a qualified professional. In every case the review of the student's needs due to his/her disability are considered in addition to the goals of University Housing.

Disability-related housing requests must be made well in advance and on an annual basis. The specific accommodation request and documentation of disability must be received by Disability Services no later than the deadlines established by University Housing each year. Typically, for continuing students, the deadline is early March for the following academic year, and for new students and transfers, early July for the fall term. Requests received after these deadlines can only be considered on a space-available basis.

Requests that require renovations (e.g., room, bathroom renovations) will be implemented in a timely manner and in accordance with Facility Services' work schedule.

Steps for requesting a housing accommodation:

#### 1. Request

Students should begin by contacting Disability Services, Seton Hall, First Floor, Niagara University, New York 14109, 716-286-8541, 716-286-8063 (Fax), or [kadams@niagara.edu](mailto:kadams@niagara.edu) to make a formal disability-related housing request. The request should be in writing and include the following information:

1. Contact information: name, ID number, permanent address, phone (cell preferred if available), email, number of semesters at Niagara, academic year for which request is being made.
2. A description of the physical, psychological, or health impairment for which the housing accommodation is being requested. Specify whether the condition is temporary or permanent.
3. A specific housing accommodation request that is needed due to a disabling condition. Note that all residence halls are smoke-free and that there is no carpeting in student rooms. Some housing accommodation examples are listed below.
  1. Single room
  2. Accessible room/bathroom
  3. Room modification / accessible furnishings (e.g., lower bar in closet)
  4. Visual alarm
  5. Lower floor
  6. Building with an elevator

## 7. Residency exemption

4. An explanation of how the specific housing accommodation request is necessary based on appropriately documented disability (see number 2 below).
5. A description of the steps you have taken (or will take) to personally address your need(s). For example, most often, students with allergies or asthma may be able to control their symptoms by controlling their environment including keeping their room clean, using a portable air purification system, eliminating throw rugs in their room (there is no carpeting in student rooms), using dust-mite proof casings on pillows and mattress, etc. Students with ADD/ADHD who may need to study in a distraction-reduced location may be able to address their attention/concentration needs when reading or studying by going to another location such as the library.
6. Name and contact information of the medical professional who will be providing documentation of disability. The professional providing the documentation of disability must specialize in the area of the condition or disability and cannot be a friend of the family or related to the student.
7. A statement giving permission for Disability Services to share information related to the student's housing request with other appropriate campus personnel such as University Housing, Counseling Services, Health Services, and Facility Services, in order to process the student's request in a timely manner.

## 2. Documentation

Acceptable documentation includes letters, records, or reports from the student's psychologist/psychiatrist, doctor, physician assistant or comparable professional. Documentation must support the student's request for disability-related housing accommodations. Recommended accommodations can be included. However, the medical professional must make explicit connections between the student's functional limitations and any recommended accommodations.

The Disability Services staff can provide the student with a copy of Niagara's "Disability Verification Form" for his/her medical professional to complete. A prescription pad statement of disability is not acceptable documentation.

**Definition of Disability:** For accommodation purposes, an individual with a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), is a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Major life activities include self-care, walking, standing, eating, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, sleeping, performing manual tasks, lifting, bending, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, working, and some bodily functions. .

The presence of the disorder/condition by itself does not necessarily qualify an individual for accommodations under Section 504 or the ADA. It is the substantial limitation(s) of one or more major

life activities due to the disorder or condition that will be the determining factor(s) in eligibility for specific housing accommodations. If the qualified professional makes recommendations for housing accommodations, he/she must make explicit connections between the accommodation and the student's functional limitations. Ultimately, if the University determines that the student's condition supports the student's request for a disability-related housing accommodation, it reserves the right to determine how best to accommodate the students' needs given the type of housing available at the time of the request.

Documentation can be either mailed or faxed to Disability Services at Seton Hall, First Floor, Niagara University, NY 14109, 716-286-8063 (Fax) as soon as possible.

### 3. Decision

Decisions regarding housing accommodations are made by the Coordinator of Disability Services. As needed, the decision will be made in consultation with other appropriate campus personnel including the Director of University Housing, Counseling Services, Health Services, and Facility Services.

Accommodation requests are carefully evaluated on a case-by-case basis given the documented impact of the student's disability, the medical necessity of the accommodation, as well as the considerations listed below

#### **Considering the severity of the condition:**

1. If the request is not met, will the impact of the condition be life threatening or will there be any negative health impact that may be permanent?
2. Is the request an integral component of a treatment plan for the condition in question?
3. What is the likely impact on academic performance, social development, and/or on the student's level of comfort?

#### **Considering the timing of the request:**

1. Was the request made with the initial housing request? Was the request made before the deadline for housing requests for the semester in question?
2. 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.)?

#### **Considering the feasibility of the request and the availability of space:**

1. Is space available that meets the student's needs?
2. Is the student in special interest housing on-campus? If so, can the requested room assignment or accommodation be met within that area on campus?

3. Can space be adapted to provide the requested room assignment or accommodation without creating a safety hazard (electrical load, emergency egress, etc.)?
4. Are there other effective methods, housing assignments, or accommodations that would achieve similar benefits as what was requested?
5. How does meeting this request impact housing commitments to other students?
6. Is the cost of meeting the request prohibitive?

The goal of every decision is to support 1) the student needs as documented by a qualified professional (i.e., medical doctor, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, psychiatrist, psychologist, specialists) and 2) the goals of university housing:

**Goals of University Housing:**

Residence life is a significant part of the Niagara University experience. Living on campus allows for interaction among students, providing both educational and social experiences that contribute to individual development, personal enrichment and self-expression, along with the opportunity to live among people with different cultural backgrounds. Students who live on campus also tend to perform better academically, acclimate more rapidly to the collegiate environment, become involved in a greater number of learning experiences that complement classroom teachings, and are more satisfied in general with the college experience.

**Residency Exemption Considerations:**

1. For all residency exemption requests, the university will first identify accommodation alternatives it can provide the student on campus. If an accommodation cannot be provided on campus, the residency exemption will then be considered.
2. A residency exemption requested by a current student will also include a review of the student's prior experience managing his/her disability in the residence hall. This process will include an interview with the student to ascertain what needs arose in the residence hall as a result of the disabling condition and the steps the student took to address these needs including assistance provided by the university.

**4. Evacuation Needs**

The names and housing assignments of students who identify a need for evacuation assistance will be forwarded to the appropriate residence life staff, Campus Safety, and Facilities. Students with evacuation needs must also become familiar with the university's evacuation procedures located at:

<http://www.niagara.edu/ds-evacuation-2/> .

**5. Questions**

If you have any questions or need additional information regarding disability-related housing requests, please contact:

Nicole Piorkowski, Director, Residence Life  
O'Shea Hall, Niagara University NY 14109  
716-286-8100 / 716-286-8597 (fax) / [residencelife@niagara.edu](mailto:residencelife@niagara.edu)

Kelly Engert, Coordinator, Disability Services  
Seton Hall, Niagara University 14109  
716-286-8541 / 716-286-8063 (fax) / [kadams@niagara.edu](mailto:kadams@niagara.edu)

Alternate format needs: Please contact Kelly Engert using the contact information printed above.