**BEST PRACTICES FOR DOCUMENTING AN INDIVIDUAL’S NEED FOR ASSISTANCE ANIMALS IN HOUSING**

**LET’S START WITH WHAT YOU CANNOT ASK FOR OR REQUIRE.**

* May not require that a health care professional use a specific form including the HUD recommended documents.
* May not require notarized statements
* May not ask a healthcare professional to make statements under penalty of perjury
* May not ask a healthcare professional to provide an individual’s diagnosis
* May not ask a healthcare professional to provide detailed information about a person’s physical or mental impairment

**GENERAL REQUIREMENT FOR ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED**

* Have the healthcare professional sign and date any documentation provided and ask that they provide contact information and any professional licensing information

**GENERAL QUESTIONS YOU MAY ASK:**

* The patient’s name.
* Whether the healthcare professional has a professional relationship with the patient/applicant/tenant involving the provision of health care or disability-related services.
* The type of animal for which the reasonable accommodation is sought (dog, cat, bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, other rodent, fish, turtle, other specified type of domesticated animal or other specified unique animal).

**DISABILITY-RELATED QUESTIONS (for fair housing laws, a person has a disability when they have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, excluding addiction caused by current, illegal use of a controlled substance).**

* Whether the patient has a physical or mental impairment;
* Whether the patient’s impairment substantially limits at least one major life activity or major bodily function; and
* Whether the patient needs the animal (because it does work, provides assistance, or performs at least one task that benefits the patient because of his or her disability, or because it provides therapeutic emotional support to alleviate a symptom or effect of the disability of the patient/client, and not merely as a pet).

**IF THE REQUESTED ANIMAL IS NOT A DOMESTICATED ANIMAL THAT IS TRADITIONALLY KEPT IN THE HOME FOR PLEASURE RATHER THAN COMMERCIAL PURPOSES, ASK THAT THE HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

* The date of last consultation with the patient.
* Any unique circumstance justifying the patient’s need for the particular animal (if already owned or identified by the tenant/applicant) or particular type of animal, and
* Whether the health care professional has reliable information about this specific animal or whether they specifically recommended this type of animal.

**Remember, the need for a unique animal may occur where:**

* **Allergies prevent a person from using a dog;**
* **Without the animal, the symptoms or effects of a person’s disability will be significantly increased;**
* **The animal can do something a dog cannot (example of monkey with fingers)**