

The University of Mississippi
Housing Accommodations Policy and Procedures

Overview

The University of Mississippi (UM) is committed to achieving maximal access and equal opportunity for all qualified students, including those with disabilities. This policy derives from policy #10000649 which states the University commitment to not discriminate against any student, employee, or applicant for admission or employment based on disability status. These guidelines are provided so that UM can respond appropriately to the individual needs of the student.

The learning environment and residential living are central to the University of Mississippi experience, particularly for first year students who are required to live in our residence halls. It should be noted that living within the community and learning to share space and be considerate of others is a vital part of that learning experience.

The Law

The Americans with Disability Act (as amended in 2008), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Fair Housing Act explicitly prohibit discrimination in matters of housing. As such, educational housing programs are subject to federal regulations and are obligated to ensure equal access to housing programs for qualified students with disabilities.

Policy

At UM, the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS) is responsible for reviewing all requests for accommodations. Accommodations in campus-owned housing may be approved on a case-by-case basis for students who demonstrate a significant need for these accommodations because of the severe impact of a diagnosed disability. As with all accommodations, housing accommodations are very individualized in nature and must be directly related to the impact of the student's diagnosed disorder.

UM reserves the right to determine eligibility for services based on the nature of the diagnosed disorder, the seriousness of the impact of the diagnosed disorder, and the reasonableness, feasibility and availability of the requested accommodation.

Students requesting housing accommodations must submit supporting medical/psychological documentation and complete the approval process to become registered with the SDS. SDS documentation guidelines can be found on the SDS website at <http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/sds>. Students should share this information with their treating medical or psychological professional. All documentation submitted will receive confidential review by SDS.

Students must also be eligible for university housing; this means enrollment in a housing eligible program, school approval, and status as a full-time student. Students must follow general housing procedures, should be aware of published procedures and deadlines for general housing requests, and should consult with the Department of Student Housing for more information:
http://www.olemiss.edu/stu_housing/.

The Department of Student Housing will make reasonable efforts to accommodate a student's preference regarding location and room type indicated on the housing application; however, UM's first priority is to accommodate disability-related housing needs and then to meet room type preferences.

If reasonable accommodations cannot be immediately satisfied due to capacity/facility design/availability/etc., the Department of Student Housing will prioritize this request before handling others. Some requests for housing accommodations may require renewal on a yearly basis depending on the nature of the diagnosed disorder.

Roommates will be assigned to students approved for housing accommodations in the same manner as other residential students. Rental rates for students with approved housing accommodations shall be set at the same rate as other students except in situations as may be determined by SDS and the Department of Student Housing.

Students requesting housing accommodations are encouraged to submit their request and supporting documentation to SDS no later than the following dates:

Entering Fall Semester

June 1

Entering Spring Semester

October 1

Entering Summer Semester

March 1

Housing accommodation requests received by SDS after the above dates will be accepted and considered; however, SDS reviews all accommodation requests in the order in which they are received. The review of accommodation requests can be a time-consuming process and SDS cannot guarantee that housing accommodation requests received after the above dates will be reviewed and approved in time to meet general housing deadlines.

Examples of Housing Accommodations

Wheelchair accessible unit
Wheelchair accessible toilet/sink
Semi-private bathroom
Private bathroom
First floor room
Private room
Roll-in shower
Flashing safety alarms
Service animal
Assistance Animal
Close proximity to certain locations on campus
Braille signage

Evaluation Criteria

SDS and the Department of Student Housing evaluate requests for housing accommodations very carefully and will consider the following questions in our evaluation process:

Necessity of Request

- a. Is the requested accommodation needed because of a diagnosed disorder or is it a preference?

- b. What, if any, permanent negative health impact may be experienced by the student if the request cannot be provided?
- c. Is the accommodation requested an essential element of a treatment plan for the student's diagnosed disorder?
- d. If the request cannot be provided, would the impact of the student's condition be life-threatening?
- e. What is the possible academic and/or social impact if the requested accommodation cannot be provided?
- f. If the accommodation cannot be provided, what is the likely impact on the student's level of comfort?

Timing of the Request

- a. Was the request made with initial housing request?
- b. Was the request made before the deadline for housing requests for the semester in question?
- c. 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.)

Feasibility and Availability of the Request

- a. Is the requested accommodation readily available within the current housing program?
- b. Can space be adapted to provide the requested configuration without creating a safety hazard (electrical load, emergency egress, etc.)?
- c. Are there alternative housing accommodations that may provide the same level of access if the original request cannot be provided?
- d. How does meeting this request impact housing commitments to other students?

Procedure for Requesting Housing Accommodations

1. Student must be admitted to the University before housing accommodation requests can be reviewed.
2. Student must follow general student housing procedures requesting student housing, should remain aware of required housing deadlines, and should consult the Department of Student Housing for more information http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/stu_housing/.
3. Student must apply to SDS for housing accommodations, and other types of accommodations, by completing the following process:
 - a. Submission of a completed and signed intake application (available online or by contacting SDS).
 - b. Completion of an initial interview conducted by an SDS staff member (can take place in person or via telephone or computer).
 - c. Submission of medical and/or psychological documentation that supports the need for the requested accommodation (Documentation guidelines available online or by contacting SDS).
 - d. Once SDS receives the above information, the student's request for housing accommodations will be reviewed. SDS will collaborate with the Department of Student Housing on all requests for housing accommodations.
 - e. If housing accommodations are approved, the student will be required to meet with SDS staff to complete the approval process. Students may be required to review and sign additional information specific to the approved accommodation.

4. If a housing accommodation request is approved, the student must contact the Department of Student Housing staff to discuss the implementation of any approved housing accommodation.

Appeal/Grievance Process

If a student believes that he/she was improperly denied a reasonable housing accommodation, the student should direct their concern to the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs or designee. The student must provide, in writing, the nature of the concern and any other relevant information within five business days of receipt of the housing accommodation decision. The Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs or designee will review all pertinent information before rendering a decision. If the student still believes that the accommodation request was improperly denied, the student can then appeal to the Office of Equal Opportunity & Regulatory Compliance.

University policy prohibits retaliatory action being taken against any complainant or any person assisting a complainant who is acting in good faith. Any university staff member or faculty member who is found to have retaliated against a complainant may be subjected to immediate disciplinary action. In addition, any person who knowingly brings forth a false allegation may be subjected to immediate disciplinary action.

Confidentiality

The university has a responsibility to maintain confidentiality of disability-related documentation and may not release any part of the documentation without the student's informed and written consent, or written release from the diagnosing professional or agency except as allowed by law. SDS and the Department of Student Housing must receive written consent to discuss with parents confidential information regarding a student's disability.

All required accommodation-related forms and documentation must be sent to:

Office of Student Disability Services
234 Martindale
P.O. Box 1848
University, MS 38677

Phone: 662-915-7128
Fax: 662-915-5972
Email: sds@olemiss.edu

Incomplete applications or those without disability documentation will not be considered.