

# TAUNTON HOUSING AUTHORITY

## PET POLICY

Residents of units owned and managed by the Taunton Housing Authority (the "Authority") may own and keep common household pets, provided, that they manage such pets responsibly and otherwise comply with those city ordinances applicable to the ownership and care of a pet and with the guidelines set out herein. Violation of any of these ordinances or guidelines may be grounds for removal of the pet or termination of a resident's tenancy (or both), in accordance with applicable rules and regulations. The Taunton Police Department and Taunton Animal Control Officer shall have responsibility for enforcement of applicable city ordinances. The manager of each of the Authority's developments shall have primary responsibility for enforcing the guidelines in this pet policy.

Any resident desiring to keep a pet in his/her unit must first obtain the written approval of the Authority. Such approval will be based on, among other things, the resident's demonstration that he/she has the capability to care for the pet and certification that he/she will abide by the following guidelines concerning pet ownership and pet maintenance:

### **I. Applicability of Pet Policy**

This pet policy shall apply to all residents of the Authority's family and elderly units wishing to own and/or maintain a pet in their unit as of the effective date of this Pet Policy. Any resident who owns or maintains a pet in a family unit as of this date must submit an application to the Authority within fourteen (14) days of this effective date requesting written approval for the pet. Failure to submit an application within this time limit or to obtain the Authority's written approval upon submission of a timely application may be grounds for removal of the pet or termination of a resident's tenancy (or both).

### **II. General Guidelines**

1. Any resident of one of the Authority's family or elderly units who wishes to obtain and/or keep a common household pet must first submit a written request for approval with his/her public housing manager and must receive authorization from the Authority in writing. The Authority reserves the right to check references, such as prior landlords and neighbors, regarding the resident's previous pet ownership history and the pet's behavioral history. If the Authority concludes that maintenance of the pet by the resident in the Authority's housing unit would in the Authority's opinion, be

inappropriate or ill advised, the Authority will inform the tenant in writing, stating the specific reasons for the denial. Permission to own and keep a specific pet will not be unreasonably withheld. A tenant has the right to bring complaints and concerns regarding pet ownership to their housing manager.

2. Only common household pets will be approved by the Authority for ownership and maintenance. Common household pets are defined for purposes of the Authority's Pet Policy as follows: Dogs, Cats, Birds, Fish, Guinea Pigs, Gerbils, Hamsters, and other small domesticated animals which are approved at the discretion of the Authority. Notwithstanding this list, birds of prey (e.g. eagles, hawks, falcons), pigeons, chickens, roosters, rabbits and reptiles of all kind shall not qualify as common household pets under this policy. The mature size of dogs is limited to a weight not to exceed forty (40) pounds. Regardless of size, dog's of a vicious or aggressive disposition, will not be permitted. Due to the behavioral activities of puppies and kittens, applications for ownership of such young animals shall be more closely reviewed prior to approval.

3. No resident or apartment unit shall have more than one pet. Notwithstanding this limitation, a maximum of two birds in a cage and two aquariums not to exceed twenty gallons combined. Birds must be kept in cages; guinea pigs, gerbils and hamsters in cages or aquariums; and fish and turtles in aquariums.

4. All female dogs over the age of six (6) months and all female cats over the age of five (5) months shall be spayed. All male dogs over the age of eight (8) months and all male cats over the age of ten (10) months must be neutered. Pet Owners will sign a written agreement that their pet will undergo the above- mentioned procedure and provide documentation of the same. All pets shall be inoculated in accordance with state and local laws. All medical documentation must be given to the Authority annually and placed in a file. Failure to submit documentation may result in the removal of the pet and/or termination of tenancy.

### **III. Application for Pet Approval**

1. Any resident interested in owning a pet must obtain written approval from the Authority prior to housing the pet. The Resident must first read and understand all regulations surrounding Pet Ownership, and discuss all aspects of housing a specific pet with the Authority. Upon reviewing the policy the resident will sign the application for a pet rider certifying that they understand all regulations and requirements for Pet Ownership, and agree to abide by all of the rules listed in this policy and all city ordinances applicable to pet ownership. Pet owners agree also to abide by any and all changes to this policy, including but not limited to retrospective changes as approved by the Authority's Board of Commissioners.

2. As part of the process for reviewing applications for pet ownership the applicant must be a tenant in "good standing", all rent and/or maintenance charges must be paid to

date, the apartment must pass inspection for housekeeping and the availability of facilities to house a pet, no eviction proceedings may be pending.

3. If the Authority concludes that pet ownership is warranted a temporary, conditional approval may be issued, authorizing the housing of a specific pet, conditional on the Authority's receipt of the following documentation before the pet moves into the unit with the exception of the veterinarians certificate and color photo, which may be obtained one week after the pet is housed. Specifically this documentation includes:

- a. Veterinary certificates of spaying or neutering and of rabies, distemper, parvovirus, feline leukemia and other inoculations if applicable.
- b. Dog licensing certificates in accordance with state and local laws.
- c. Color photo and identifying description and name of the pet to be housed.
- d. Pet rider of which shall include the names, addresses and phone number of both a primary and alternate caretaker, in the event the owner becomes incapacitated or not immediately available in the case of an emergency. Caretakers must provide a signed verification of their knowledge and willingness to assume the responsibility for the pet. In the event where a caretaker cannot be found a veterinarian's name will be provided who will house the pet at the owner's expense.
- e. A pet deposit of \$160.00 or one months rent, whichever is less, is required of each resident pet owner desiring to house a pet. The resident pet owner may pay this over a period of time by signing a rental agreement with the Taunton Housing Authority. If this rental agreement is broken at any time the Authority will commence eviction proceedings. This deposit is only to be returned at the time the pet is no longer living in the unit or the resident moves, and will only be refunded if no damage has been caused to the common area, resident's apartment, and any apartment the pet may have visited. Any damages caused during the pet's stay to any property owned and maintained by the Authority will be paid for by the pet owner (this will not come out of the deposit), this includes the cost of exterminating for fleas or other insects, due to the pet, and/or neglect by the owner. Failure to pay any charges incurred may result in eviction.

#### **IV. Resident's Responsibilities**

1. Resident is responsible for notifying the Authority in writing of any change in the information initially provided in the application for pet ownership within fourteen (14) days of the change.
2. Resident pet owners will be responsible for proper pet care, good nutrition, grooming, exercise, flea control, routine veterinary care and yearly inoculations. Dogs and cats must wear identification tags and collars when outside of the apartment unit.
3. Resident pet owner is responsible for cleaning up after the pet inside the apartment, in all common areas and in any apartment the pet may visit. A "pooper scooper" and disposable plastic bag is required to be carried by the pet owner while outside of the apartment with the pet, and all wastes shall be bagged and disposed of in a trash receptacle. Under no circumstances should any pet debris be deposited in a toilet, as blockage may occur.
4. Pet blankets and bedding are not to be cleaned or washed in the Authority's laundry room for hygienic purposes.
5. Resident pet owners will keep the unit and general area (including the patio, if applicable) clear and free of pet odors, insect infestation, waste and litter and must maintain the unit and general area in a sanitary condition.
6. Resident pet owners will restrain and prevent the pet from gnawing, chewing, scratching, or otherwise defacing doors, walls, windows, fixtures, appliances and floor coverings of the unit, other units and common areas including shrubs and landscaping.
7. Pets are not to be tied outside. Any pet outside or in hallways must be accompanied by a resident and restrained on a leash. All cats should be indoor cats.
8. Resident pet owners will not alter their unit, patio, deck, or other outside areas to create an enclosure for a pet.
9. Pets are not permitted in Community Centers or Laundry Rooms.
10. Pets will not be allowed to disturb the health, safety, comfort or quiet enjoyment of other tenants, guests, staff or anyone else who may be at the property. A pet should not create a nuisance to neighbors with excessive barking, whining, chirping or other unruly behavior.
11. Resident pet owners hereby agree to apartment inspections by the Authority when, in the opinion of the Authority, there is cause to believe a pet and or unit is not being cared for properly and/or damage may have been caused by the pet.

12. Resident pet owners must provide litter boxes for cat wastes, which must be kept in the owners unit, and be kept clean and odor free.

13. Residents are prohibited from feeding or harboring stray animals. The feeding or harboring of a stray animal shall constitute having a pet without the approval of the Authority.

14. No pet is to remain unattended for more than twenty-four hours at a time, with the exception of a dog, not more than ten hours. Should the Authority have good cause to believe that a pet has been left longer than the designated time, the Authority may enter the apartment without notice and remove the pet, issuing the pet to the listed caretaker, or veterinarians care at the owner's expense, and the pet owner will lose pet ownership privileges.

## **V. Liability of Pet Owner for Damage or Injury**

1. Charges for such damages caused by pets shall include the costs of materials, labor, supplies and contract costs. Payment plans may be set up with the Authority and the pet owner, at the Authority's discretion. No more than one payment plan may be issued per year. Should the payment plan be broken, the pet owner will remove the pet from the premises and will lose the privilege to house a pet with the Authority.

2. The pet owner will hold the Taunton Housing Authority harmless and indemnify the Taunton Housing Authority from any and all claims, liabilities, or penalties asserted by or on behalf of any person, corporation, or public entity due to the result of the pet owner's failure to carry out his or her responsibilities and obligations under this policy.

## **VI. Service Animal Expense Deduction**

1. When a tenant can document that a specially trained service animal is medically necessary, a deduction from Gross Household Income will be permitted. Expenses which may be deducted include: costs of obtaining such animal, pet food, medical expenses including veterinarian services and prescriptions, grooming, training expenses if such expenses are incurred from a third party provider of training services, and necessary equipment such as leashes. Expenses such as dog jackets, blankets, books and toys may not be deducted.

I have read and understand the above rules and regulations concerning pet ownership, and will abide by the Authority's Pet Policy throughout my tenancy with the Taunton Housing Authority.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Resident Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Taunton Housing Site Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Revised Pet Policy  
Approved 4/18/07  
Approved 10/15/08