

LAKELAND HOUSING AUTHORITY

ADA, SECTION 504 AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION POLICY

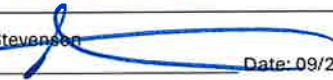
Fiscal Year 2027

Program Access • Effective Communication • Physical and Digital Accessibility • Assistance Animals

Policy Item	Information
Agency	Housing Authority of the City of Lakeland, Florida
PHA Code	FL011
Resolution	26-1575
Board Meeting / Effective Date	09/21/2026
Board Chairman	David Samples
Executive Director	Benjamin Stevenson
Section 504/ADA Coordinator	Senior Vice President or Executive Director designee
Supersedes	11b - ADA and 504 Rules 2026 and prior related procedures

POLICY STATUS

This comprehensive policy replaces the legacy manual and modernizes terminology, reasonable-accommodation processing, verification, effective communication, accessible-unit use, digital accessibility, assistance-animal review, emergency access, records, training, and quality assurance while preserving applicable HUD housing requirements.

Approval	Signature / Date
Board Chairman	David Samples Signature:  Date: 09/21/2026
Executive Director	Benjamin Stevenson Signature:  Date: 09/21/2026

Executive Transmittal and Board Action

To	Board of Commissioners
From	Carlos R. Pizarro An, Senior Vice-President (COO)
Subject	FY 2027 ADA, Section 504 and Reasonable Accommodation Policy
Requested Action	Approve under Resolution 26-1575; authorize implementation and non-substantive technical updates.
Board Meeting	09/21/2026

BOARD MOTION

Approve the FY 2027 ADA, Section 504 and Reasonable Accommodation Policy under Resolution 26-1575, effective 09/21/2026, and authorize the Executive Director or designee to implement procedures, forms, training, accessibility reviews, and corrective action.

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1. Purpose, Policy, Scope, and Authorities

LHA will not exclude, deny benefits to, or discriminate against a qualified individual with a disability in any program, service, activity, dwelling, employment function, communication, digital service, public meeting, or other operation to which applicable disability law applies. LHA will provide program access, reasonable accommodations, reasonable modifications, auxiliary aids and services, and accessible communications when required.

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 8.
- Titles I, II, and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, as applicable, and DOJ regulations at 28 CFR Parts 35 and 36.
- Fair Housing Act and HUD regulations at 24 CFR Part 100.
- Architectural Barriers Act, 24 CFR Parts 40 and 41, UFAS, 2010 ADA Standards, and other controlling accessibility standards, as applicable.
- 24 CFR 8.20 through 8.33 program accessibility, physical accessibility, communication, occupancy, and administrative requirements.
- HUD program requirements for Public Housing, HCV, PBV, FSS, relocation, VAWA, HOME, and other federal assistance.

2. Definitions

Term	Definition
Disability	A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment, as defined by the controlling law.
Reasonable accommodation	A change, exception, or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice, service, or procedure that may be necessary for equal opportunity.
Reasonable modification	A physical change to a dwelling, common area, facility, or other physical environment.
Effective communication	Communication that is equally effective, considering nature, length, complexity, context, and the person's usual method.
Auxiliary aids and services	Qualified interpreters, captioning, relay, readers, accessible electronic documents, Braille, large print, audio, and other effective methods.
Accessible unit	A dwelling with accessibility features intended for a person whose disability requires those features.
Assistance animal	An animal considered under applicable housing-discrimination or Section 504 requirements; not automatically governed by pet rules.
Service animal	An animal meeting the applicable ADA definition and training requirements for the setting.

3. Governance and Coordinator Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board	Adopt policy and receive material compliance reporting.
Executive Director	Executive accountability, resources, designation of coordinator, final burden/fundamental-alteration determinations.
Section 504/ADA Coordinator	Central review, technical assistance, forms, complex decisions, complaints, self-evaluation, training, monitoring, and corrective action.
Department Directors	Implement procedures, identify access barriers, timely refer requests, budget approved measures, and monitor staff.
Property/HCV/Resident Services Staff	Recognize oral or written requests, document, assist, avoid unauthorized inquiries, and refer promptly.
Maintenance/Development	Assess specifications, costs, codes, standards, procurement, completion, and accessibility quality.
IT/Communications	Maintain accessible web, mobile, documents, portals, media, meetings, and vendor requirements.

4. Nondiscrimination and Program Accessibility

- Administer programs in the most integrated setting appropriate.
- Do not use eligibility criteria, methods, contracts, or site selections that have prohibited discriminatory effects.
- Ensure existing programs, viewed in their entirety, are readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities.
- Use structural changes, relocation of services, home visits, delivery of services, reassignment, equipment, or other methods as appropriate.
- Provide notice identifying the coordinator, accommodation process, effective communication options, and complaint procedures.

ACCESSIBILITY UNIT STANDARD

For covered new multifamily housing under 24 CFR Part 8, HUD materials identify at least 5 percent of units, but not fewer than one, accessible to persons with mobility disabilities and an additional 2 percent, but not fewer than one, accessible to persons with hearing or vision disabilities. LHA will apply the controlling standard for each project, including any stricter source, code, funding, or agreement requirement.

5. Reasonable Accommodation Process

A request may be oral or written and need not use legal terminology or an LHA form. Staff receiving information that reasonably indicates a disability-related need for a change must treat it as a possible request, offer assistance, document it, and refer it promptly. The person may request assistance at any stage of application, tenancy, participation, relocation, hearing, termination, or employment where applicable.

- Identify the requested change and the barrier it is intended to address.
- Determine whether disability and disability-related need are obvious, known, or require limited verification.
- Engage in a timely interactive process when the request is unclear, incomplete, unavailable as proposed, or may have an effective alternative.
- Consider interim measures where delay could affect safety, housing stability, deadlines, or access.
- Do not condition review on use of a form, notarization, court testimony, extensive medical records, diagnosis, or waiver of privacy.

6. Requests, Timing, and Interactive Process

Stage	Control
Intake	Date-stamp, acknowledge, identify urgency, offer communication/access assistance, assign owner.
Clarification	Request only information necessary to understand disability-related need.
Assessment	Review law/program, effectiveness, alternatives, cost, structural/operational impacts, safety, procurement, and timing.
Interactive process	Discuss effective alternatives with the requester and document communications.
Decision	Issue a prompt written approval, conditional approval, alternative, or denial with reasons and review rights.
Implementation	Assign tasks, funding, procurement, schedule, interim measures, and completion verification.
Follow-up	Confirm effectiveness and address changed circumstances.

7. Verification and Confidentiality

When disability and need are not obvious or already known, LHA may request reliable information sufficient to establish that the person is an individual with a disability and that the requested accommodation or modification may be necessary

because of the disability. LHA will not seek unrelated diagnoses, treatment records, prognosis, detailed medical history, medication lists, or other information beyond what is necessary.

- Reliable verification may come from a health care professional, peer support provider, non-medical service agency, disability organization, or another reliable person with knowledge, depending on the request and controlling law.
- Information will be maintained separately or access-restricted, shared only as necessary, and not disclosed to contractors beyond implementation needs.
- Staff may not contact a verifier without authorization when authorization is legally required.
- A requester's credible statement may be considered with other available information.

8. Approval, Alternatives, Denial, and Review

An approval will state the accommodation, responsibilities, timing, duration if temporary, and follow-up. If the exact request is unavailable or would create a legally recognized limitation, LHA will discuss other effective options. A denial must identify the individualized factual and legal basis, alternatives considered, any missing information, and review or grievance rights.

NO LOCAL DENIAL WITHOUT REVIEW

Property, maintenance, HCV, or other frontline staff shall not issue a final denial of a disability-related accommodation, modification, transfer, auxiliary aid, or assistance-animal request without review by the Section 504/ADA Coordinator or authorized designee.

9. Undue Financial and Administrative Burden and Fundamental Alteration

Only the Executive Director or authorized senior official may make a final written determination that an action would impose an undue financial and administrative burden or fundamentally alter the nature of a program, after considering all resources available for the program, costs, benefits, alternatives, funding, operational effects, and applicable law. Even when the proposed action cannot be granted, LHA will take another action that does not create the limitation but provides maximum feasible access.

10. Reasonable Modifications and Physical Alterations

- Determine which law and funding source controls responsibility for cost.
- Review proposed work for accessibility standards, codes, permits, safety, procurement, ownership approval, and restoration issues.
- Do not require restoration of modifications that do not interfere with future use and enjoyment, except where law permits.
- Use qualified contractors and inspect completed work.
- Maintain project and resident records without disclosing unnecessary disability information.
- Coordinate common-area, rehabilitation, RAD, modernization, and capital work with the Section 504/ADA Coordinator before design is finalized.

11. Accessible Units, Waiting Lists, and Transfers

- Maintain an accurate inventory of accessible features, not merely unit labels.
- Maximize occupancy by households needing available features under 24 CFR Part 8 and applicable program requirements.
- Before offering an accessible unit to a household not needing its features, document required outreach and offer sequence.
- Use nondiscriminatory inquiries to determine whether a household qualifies for an accessibility preference, not whether the household is generally eligible based on disability.
- Process disability-related transfers promptly, consider interim measures, and assign costs according to controlling law and program requirements.
- Do not require a family to accept an inaccessible unit when a reasonable accommodation or appropriate accessible option is necessary.

12. Effective Communication and Auxiliary Aids

LHA will furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services when necessary for effective communication. Primary consideration will be given where required to the person's requested aid or service, unless LHA can demonstrate that another method is effective or a recognized limitation applies.

Need / Context	Possible Aid or Service
Deaf or hard of hearing	Qualified ASL or oral interpreter, CART, captioning, video relay, text, assistive listening, visual alert.
Blind or low vision	Accessible electronic document, reader, audio, Braille, large print, tactile sign, orientation assistance.
Speech disability	Relay, speech-to-speech, text, communication board, additional time.
Cognitive or learning disability	Plain language, stepwise explanation, support person, accessible format, added processing time.
Remote meeting/hearing	Accessible platform, captioning, interpreter pinning, accessible documents, tested contingency process.

13. Relay, ASL, Captioning, Alternate Formats, and Emergency Communication

- Post Florida Relay 711 and current relay contact information in public-facing locations and communication materials.
- Accept relay calls as ordinary calls; staff shall not refuse or terminate them because a communications assistant participates.
- Arrange qualified interpretation or captioning for complex or high-stakes encounters.
- Provide emergency and after-hours communication methods that are usable by persons with communication disabilities.
- Do not require a companion or child to interpret except in a true emergency when no qualified option is immediately available and only until an effective aid is obtained.

14. Digital Accessibility

LHA will treat websites, mobile applications, portals, electronic forms, PDFs, documents, videos, social media used for official services, and third-party technology as part of program access. LHA will inventory, test, remediate, procure, and monitor digital content against controlling ADA Title II standards and exceptions.

2026 DIGITAL ACCESS UPDATE

DOJ's 2024 Title II rule establishes specific web and mobile-app accessibility requirements, including WCAG 2.1 Level AA. An April 20, 2026 interim final rule extended compliance dates to April 26, 2027 for public entities serving 50,000 or more and to April 26, 2028 for entities serving fewer than 50,000 or special district governments. LHA will obtain counsel's classification determination and work toward conformance before the applicable date.

- Require accessibility in procurements, contracts, renewals, and acceptance testing.
- Provide accessible alternatives during remediation without making persons with disabilities accept unequal delay, burden, or privacy risk.
- Caption prerecorded and live video when required; provide audio description or equivalent access when needed.
- Ensure forms, authentication, payment, application, waiting-list, recertification, inspection, hearing, and public-comment functions are accessible.

15. Assistance Animals and Service Animals

LHA distinguishes pet policies from disability-related animal requests. No pet deposit, pet rent, breed limit, size limit, or pet rule will be applied automatically to a qualifying animal. Individuals remain responsible for control, care, waste, and actual damage, subject to reasonable accommodation.

- Apply the legal standard governing the particular program, property, and location, including the Fair Housing Act, Section 504, and ADA where applicable.
- Ask only permissible questions and request only necessary verification.
- Make direct-threat or substantial-damage determinations based on objective evidence about the specific animal and current circumstances, not stereotypes or breed alone.
- Consider whether risk can be reduced by a reasonable condition or alternative before denial or removal.
- Do not impose a pet deposit or fee for a qualifying animal, while retaining authority to charge for actual damage on the same basis as other damage.

MAY 22, 2026 HUD ENFORCEMENT GUIDANCE

HUD FHEO's May 22, 2026 memorandum states that FHEO will find reasonable cause and recommend charges in Fair Housing Act animal-accommodation cases only when the animal is trained to provide disability-related assistance. The memorandum expressly does not address HUD's processing of complaints against housing providers under Section 504 or the ADA. LHA will not treat this enforcement memorandum as eliminating obligations under Section 504, the ADA, other applicable law, or binding court decisions; complex cases require Coordinator and counsel review.

16. Public Housing, HCV/PBV, FSS, Relocation, and MTW Coordination

Program	Key Coordination
Public Housing	Admissions, accessible units, transfers, lease rules, grievance, physical modifications, communication, pets/animals, NSPIRE.
HCV/PBV	Briefings, search time, payment standards where authorized, live-in aides, inspections, portability, owner communication, informal review/hearing.
FSS/Resident Services	Voluntary access, CoP/ITSP, coaching, escrow communication, modified service delivery.
RAD/Relocation/Development	Accessible notices, advisory services, comparable accessible housing, moving assistance, claims, return rights, design and construction.
MTW	Apply only approved waivers and safe harbors; do not waive civil-rights obligations absent lawful express authority.

17. Emergency Preparedness and NSPIRE Coordination

- Identify requested assistance for evacuation, alerts, sheltering, temporary relocation, medication refrigeration, mobility equipment, and communication.
- Do not require residents to disclose more information than necessary; participation in assistance registries should be voluntary unless law provides otherwise.
- Coordinate visual/audible alarms, accessible routes, emergency work orders, elevator outages, power outages, and temporary accommodations.
- Use NSPIRE findings and work orders to correct accessibility-related health and safety deficiencies promptly.
- Provide accessible emergency notices and alternative channels.

18. Employment and Vendor Responsibilities

- Apply ADA Title I and Section 504 employment obligations where applicable.
- Keep employee medical information confidential and separate.
- Require contractors, property managers, hearing officers, technology vendors, interpreters, architects, and service providers to comply with applicable accessibility and confidentiality requirements.
- Do not delegate away LHA's responsibility for program access.

19. Complaints, Grievances, Retaliation, and Corrective Action

A person may raise a disability-access concern orally or in writing. LHA will assist with filing, provide effective communication, prohibit retaliation or interference, investigate promptly, preserve applicable hearing or grievance rights, and document findings and corrective action. A complaint does not suspend a separate deadline unless law or a written decision provides otherwise.

20. Records, Privacy, Training, Monitoring, and Reporting

- Maintain request, verification, analysis, interactive process, decision, implementation, cost, inspection, complaint, and review records.
- Restrict disability information to authorized staff with a need to know.
- Train staff before assignment and annually on request recognition, verification limits, effective communication, animals, accessible units, digital access, emergencies, and retaliation.
- Perform quarterly file samples and annual program, facility, communication, digital, and vendor reviews.
- Report aggregate trends without disclosing confidential information.

Performance Measure	Frequency	Management Standard
Requests acknowledged and assigned	Quarterly	Track all; investigate delays.
Decisions supported by documented analysis	Quarterly	100% sampled files.
Denials centrally reviewed	Quarterly	100%.
Approved measures implemented	Quarterly	Track timeliness and effectiveness.
Accessible unit inventory validated	Annual	100% portfolio review.
Digital accessibility remediation	Quarterly	Progress against applicable deadline.
Training completion	Annual	100% designated staff.
Complaints/corrective actions	Quarterly	100% logged and addressed.

21. Implementation and Revision Control

Action	Owner	Timing
Board adoption	Board	09/21/2026
Coordinator designation and contacts	Executive Director	Upon adoption
Issue forms and workflow	Coordinator	Upon implementation
Accessible unit and facility inventory	Operations/Development	At implementation and annually
Digital inventory and remediation plan	IT/Communications	At implementation; monitor quarterly
Staff training	HR/Coordinator	At implementation and annually
Annual legal/regulatory review	Coordinator/Counsel	Annually and upon material change

Revision	Date	Description	Approval
FY 2027 Comprehensive Revision	09/21/2026	Replaces 2026 manual; modernizes accommodation, communication, physical/digital accessibility, animals, monitoring, and forms.	Resolution 26-1575

Appendix A. Reasonable Accommodation / Modification Request

Field	Entry
Requester / household member	
Program / property / address	
Preferred communication and format	
Requested accommodation or modification	
Barrier or disability-related need	
Urgency / deadline / interim measure	
Verifier, if needed and authorized	
Signature / date	

Appendix B. Limited Verification Form

Do not request diagnosis or unrelated medical information. Complete only when disability and/or disability-related need are not obvious or already known.

Question	Response
Does the person have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities under the applicable standard?	Yes / No / Insufficient information
Is the requested change or an effective alternative related to the disability and potentially necessary for equal use, enjoyment, access, or participation?	Yes / No / Explain
Functional limitation or nexus information necessary to evaluate the request	
Verifier name, role, contact, signature, date	

Appendix C. Decision and Interactive Process Worksheet

- ☐ Request and date received
- ☐ Oral request documented
- ☐ Urgency and interim measures
- ☐ Disability/need obvious, known, or verification required
- ☐ Only necessary information requested
- ☐ Programs/laws/standards identified
- ☐ Requested accommodation effectiveness
- ☐ Alternatives discussed
- ☐ Cost/resources/funding reviewed
- ☐ Safety/direct threat based on objective evidence
- ☐ Coordinator review

- ☐ Written decision and review rights
- ☐ Implementation owner/date
- ☐ Effectiveness follow-up

Appendix D. Accessibility Modification Checklist

- ☐ Scope and disability-related need
- ☐ Controlling cost responsibility
- ☐ Applicable design standard/code
- ☐ Common area/unit/program access impact
- ☐ Drawings/specifications
- ☐ Permits and procurement
- ☐ Temporary relocation/access
- ☐ Contractor accessibility requirements
- ☐ Inspection and acceptance
- ☐ Resident communication
- ☐ As-built and inventory update

Appendix E. Assistance Animal Review

- ☐ Property/program legal framework identified
- ☐ Pet versus disability-related request separated
- ☐ Animal training/work/tasks considered where applicable
- ☐ Disability and nexus information limited to what is needed
- ☐ No prohibited pet fee/deposit applied
- ☐ Individualized direct-threat/damage analysis
- ☐ Reasonable conditions or alternatives considered
- ☐ Section 504/ADA implications reviewed
- ☐ Coordinator/counsel review for complex or denied request
- ☐ Written decision and review rights

Appendix F. Effective Communication Request

Field	Entry
Person / companion needing aid	
Communication disability / functional need	
Requested aid or service	
Event/document/date/time	
Complexity and importance	
Aid/service arranged and provider	

Alternative proposed and effectiveness basis	
Completion / issue / follow-up	

Appendix G. Accessible Unit and Transfer Checklist

- ☐ Unit feature inventory verified
- ☐ Current resident need/outreach reviewed
- ☐ Waiting list applicants needing features reviewed
- ☐ Offer sequence documented
- ☐ Transfer request and urgency assessed
- ☐ Moving/utility/other costs determined
- ☐ Temporary measures considered
- ☐ Unit inspection and features confirmed
- ☐ Household acceptance/declination documented
- ☐ Database/inventory updated

Appendix H. Digital Accessibility Checklist

- ☐ Website/mobile/portal inventory
- ☐ Applicable Title II compliance date confirmed
- ☐ WCAG 2.1 AA testing
- ☐ PDFs/forms/applications accessible
- ☐ Keyboard and screen-reader use
- ☐ Captions/audio description
- ☐ Color contrast and text resizing
- ☐ Error identification and authentication
- ☐ Third-party vendor compliance
- ☐ Alternative access during remediation
- ☐ User feedback and issue tracking
- ☐ Quarterly remediation report

Appendix I. Annual Compliance Dashboard

Metric	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual Action
Requests/approvals/denials					
Average processing days					
Overdue implementations					
Accessible unit use/transfers					

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Auxiliary aids/services					
Digital defects remediated					
Complaints/corrective actions					
Training completion					