



Challenge | Fraudulent Documentation, Unauthorized Pets

Like many apartment operators, Rich Properties had a few breed restrictions in place for incoming pets. But that didn't seem to be a roadblock to some prospective renters, who tried to find savvy—and also unsavory—ways around those restrictions.

Essentially, they'd claim their pet was a service or assistance animal and they'd even have the documentation to try and prove it. But that documentation wasn't always valid.

"The problem is training and educating leasing associates and property managers on what constitutes valid paperwork for a service or assistance animal, and things were sneaking through," said Melanie Lundy, Operations Manager at Rich Properties. "We were trying to figure out the best way to address this."

About Rich Properties

- **Location:** South Florida
- **Units Managed:** 3,000
- **Portfolio:** Luxury apartment homes, town homes, and condominiums

Solution | Add PetScreening Platform, Drop Breed Restrictions

Rich Properties adopted PetScreening to handle its verification process, which enabled the platform to deftly handle any accommodation requests for assistance animals. It took the onus off the onsite team, which previously had to go through a tedious verification process and determine which requests were insufficient, legitimate or fraudulent.

It also saved them from potentially awkward conversations with incoming residents whose pets were ultimately not permitted. Associates now can say that they utilize an independent third-party screening platform that analyzes relevant pet and animal related data in a consistent and standardized way.

Through the process, Rich Properties discovered another huge benefit.

"It allowed us to open up our breed restrictions for pets," Lundy said. "We suddenly found that residents were less likely to jump through all those hoops to falsely declare their pet was a type of assistance animal if we'd accept the breed to start with. It created less of a headache upfront for our teams and now we're able to collect pet fees on that previously disallowed animal."

Rich Properties was able to drop pet breed restrictions because the PetScreening platform screens household pets on an individual basis and creates a history file that outlines the housing-related risk by the pet and its owner. It also considers any poor practices by the owner, such as not picking up after their pet, failure to use a leash, etc.

Pets can still be turned down at a community, but now it's on the basis of their individual data and respective owner rather than their breed alone.

Results | Removed Breed Restrictions, Recovered Lost Pet Revenue, Happy Onsite Teams

The pressure is purely off of Rich Properties' onsite teams. Now when an incoming resident brings forth an assistance animal request, associates can simply smile and let them know PetScreening will handle the review and verification process.

"When it comes back insufficient, many residents simply say 'OK, here's my pet fee,'" Lundy said. "We're not having to argue with them about why we've denied it, because PetScreening has become the middleman and has taken care of it."

Previously, a denied assistance animal that was also a restricted breed would not have been able to live at the property. After implementing the PetScreening platform, Rich Properties eliminated all pet breed restrictions, which in turn, results in denied assistance animals, regardless of breed, still having an opportunity for consideration to live at the property as a regular pet.

"It opened the door up for us to not only have better verification processes for assistance animals such as service animals and ESAs, but to collect pet rent on some of these pets that were sneaking through the system," Lundy said.

Since implementing the PetScreening platform at all 8 of its communities, Rich Properties has experienced a 40% increase in pet-related revenue. In addition, the comprehensive database of animal and owner history has allowed the company to lift pet breed restrictions. They have also experienced the intangible bonus of less burdened onsite teams.

"The property managers love it," Lundy said. "They don't have to go through the paperwork, tedious verification process or tell someone that the assistance animal certificate that they bought online isn't valid."

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