



Emotional Support Animals.

I. Definitions

A. Owner. An individual who owns, harbors, or keeps an animal, accepts responsibility for its well-being and care.

B. Emotional Support Animal (ESA). An ESA is any animal that provides emotional support alleviating one or more symptoms or effects of a person's disability. ESAs provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities.

C. Unauthorized Animal. Any animal in a residence hall room that is not a fish kept in a single tank no larger than 10 gallons or an ESA that has been officially approved and registered with the university.

D. Assistance Animal. An animal that works, aids, or performs tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, or that provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified effects of a person's disability. Under the Fair Housing Act, an assistance animal may be either a service animal or emotional support animal.

II. Policy. Under the Fair Housing Act, students with disabilities may request an ESA as a housing accommodation. To qualify, the ESA must be necessary for the student to access and enjoy residential life, with a clear link between the disability and the support the animal provides. ESAs are only allowed in the student's residence hall room and outdoor areas.

A. Reasonable accommodation decisions are made on a case-by-case basis based on the application and supporting documentation. Once the Office of Disability and Testing Services (ODTS) completes the process of determining whether an ESA is a reasonable accommodation, it will notify the student as well as the Department of Residence Life and Housing (RLH). Alternative accommodations may be considered. If approved, the student must meet with RLH to review responsibilities and register the animal. No animal is allowed on campus until final approval is granted by RLH.

1. ESA applications with supporting documentation must be received by the following dates for consideration. Requests beyond the deadline will be considered on a case-by-case basis as determined by ODTS:

a. Fall Semester- June 1st for returning students and July 1st for new students.

b. Spring Semester- December 1st for all students.

2. The university may inspect the owner's residence to ensure cleanliness and maintain safe, sanitary conditions.

3. Violating the ESA agreement may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate removal of the animal.

B. Owner's responsibilities for Emotional Support Animals.

1. ESAs must be licensed in accordance with Cuyahoga County and Ohio state laws.

2. ESA records must be submitted to RLH, with all vaccinations kept current. Rabies tags must always be visibly displayed.

3. ESAs must be kept in the owner's residence hall room and are not permitted in public areas of the residence hall except to enter or exit the building and are not permitted in other campus buildings. During transit, the animal must be leashed, harnessed, or caged.

4. ESAs must behave appropriately and not be disruptive. Owners are responsible for managing behavior, and repeated disruptions may result in removal from campus.

5. ESAs must be in good health, and owners are responsible for addressing any health issues promptly at their own expense.

6. ESA owners are responsible for their ESA's hygiene, grooming, and routine flea/tick prevention at their own expense. University facilities may not be used for bathing, and the university is not liable for these tasks. If fleas, ticks, or other pests are found, the residence will be treated by a university-approved pest control service. Any costs beyond standard pest management will be billed to the owner.

7. Owners must care for their housebroken animals, carry cleanup supplies, and dispose of waste immediately. All approved ESAs must be a year of age or older.

8. Owners must dispose of animal waste in designated trash areas. Residence hall trashcans may not be used.

9. Approved animals may not stay overnight in university housing without their owner. If the owner leaves campus for more than one day, the ESA must go with them.

10. The owner must notify RLH in writing if the approved ESA is no longer needed or no longer resides with them. A new request is required to replace the animal.

11. Owners are responsible for cleaning and repair costs beyond standard services after vacating. The university may charge these expenses to the owner's student account.

12. Any violation of these responsibilities may result in immediate removal of the animal from the university and referral to the university community standards process.

13. If the approved ESA is removed for any reason, the owner must continue to meet housing obligations unless a waiver is granted.

14. Owners will sign an annual Emotional Support Agreement.

C. Removal of Emotional Support Animals. The university may issue a warning or remove an ESA from campus for the following reasons:

1. The ESA is not under the direct physical control of the owner.
2. The ESA's behavior is disruptive to its surroundings or other members of the university community.
3. The ESA poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others.
4. The ESA's presence fundamentally alters the nature of a program or activity.
5. The owner fails to comply with any of her/his responsibilities under this policy and corresponding procedures.
6. The owner violates any aspect of their ESA Agreement.
7. Any unauthorized animal violation will be subject to the Community Standards process.

D. Community Resources. If the owner is unable to care for their ESA, RLH will provide resources about local animal shelters and rescue organizations.

