



Request for an Emotional Support Animal in University Housing

Overview of the Process for Requesting an Emotional Support Animal in University Housing

The University of Pittsburgh provides reasonable accommodations for a student with a disability who has a verifiable need for an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) in University Housing. A reasonable accommodation is an exception to the University's rules, policies, practices, or services that a student with a disability may need to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy University housing.

An Emotional Support Animal is an animal in the campus housing environment that provides emotional support or other therapeutic benefit that is necessary to alleviate or mitigate one or more identified symptoms or limitations of a student's disability. ESAs are not service animals because providing emotional support does not qualify as work or a task for the benefit of an individual with a disability for which the animal is trained.

To request an ESA in University Housing, students are required to provide documentation from a treating and licensed physician, psychiatrist, social worker, or other mental health professional who has an established professional relationship with the student and can verify, through a history of interactions, that the animal provides emotional support that alleviates one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of the disability in order to provide the student an equal opportunity to use and enjoy campus housing. Some websites sell certificates, registrations, and licensing documents for ESAs to anyone who answers certain questions or participates in a short interview and pays a fee. Such documentation from the internet is not, in itself, sufficient to reliably establish that an individual has a non-observable disability or disability-related need for an ESA.

The information completed on this form will be reviewed to determine:

1. That ~~the student is a person with a~~ documented disability;
2. That the ESA being requested is necessary to afford the student, as a person with a disability, an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the on-campus housing facilities; and
3. That there is an identifiable relationship between the disability and the support that the ESA provides.

You may complete your response below in the form provided or attach the information on letterhead.

For more information about the Rights and Responsibilities of having an animal on campus, see *University of Pittsburgh Office of Disability Resources and Services Guidelines Regarding Animals on University Property*.

Submission of this request does not guarantee approval of an ESA. The University will conduct an individualized review through an interactive process, considering the information provided, and any additional supporting documentation or information that may be necessary to make a determination.

Treatment Provider Section – to be completed by treatment provider with personal knowledge of student's disability

Part I: Student Information

1. Student Name
2. Date of Birth
3. Type of Animal Being Requested
4. Is the animal specifically recommended as part of the student's treatment plan?
☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Emotional Support Animals are considered for students identified as having a disability. **A disability is defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities."** Based on this definition, does the student have a disability?
☐ Yes ☐ No
6. If applicable, identify the student's diagnosis or provide a description of the disability sufficient to establish that the student has a disability under applicable law to support the University's individualized review of this request.

7. Date of most recent evaluation/session

Part II: Clinical Assessment of Disability-Related Need

1. How long have you been treating this student, and does the student require ongoing treatment for management of their functional limitations and symptomatology?

2. Describe the symptom(s) or limitation(s) of the student's disability that interfere with their ability to use and enjoy campus housing.

3. What is the role of the ESA in the student's overall treatment plan and what are the benefits to the student's well-being? Please identify any alternative supports or interventions that may have been considered.

4. Do you have professional evidence that an ESA has helped this student in the past or currently? If not, why do you believe this may be an effective support for the student now?

Part III: Animal-Specific Assessment

1. Explain how the specific animal requested by the student mitigates/alleviates the symptom(s) or limitation(s) described above. What specific symptoms are alleviated and how?

We understand that in some unique cases, students may need to request more than one animal. If the student is requesting to keep more than one emotional support animal, explain how each specific animal uniquely alleviates the symptom(s) or limitation(s) described above and why one animal will not sufficiently address the therapeutic symptoms of the disability.

2. If the requested ESA is not a commonly kept household animal (typically a dog, cat, small bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, other rodent, fish, turtle, or other small, domesticated animal), why do you believe this animal is better suited to meet this student's therapeutic needs?

Commonly kept household animals are the most frequently requested types of animals for ESAs, in part due to their potential (but not guaranteed) ability to adapt well to the communal living setting of a college residence hall. If the ESA request is for a non-domesticated/exotic animal, the student and medical provider must provide strong supporting documentation that clearly describes why a typical household animal would not meet the student's therapeutic needs. Alternative animal requests must have a strong therapeutic rationale rather than a student preference rationale.

3. In your opinion, how important is it for the student's well-being that an ESA be with the student in the residence hall on campus? What consequences, in terms of disability impact, may result if the accommodation is not approved?

4. Do you believe that the responsibilities of caring for an ESA in a residence hall setting could exacerbate the student's disability symptoms in any way? Historical ESA experience suggests that caring for an animal in a residence hall can be more complex than in an individual home, and the student is solely responsible for the control, care, and supervision of the ESA at all times.

Treatment Provider Information – to be completed by treatment provider
with personal knowledge of the student's disability

☐

I verify that the named student information is correct, and that I have personal knowledge of this student (i.e. knowledge used to diagnose, advise, counsel, treat or provide health care or other disability-related services to a patient/client).

Treatment Provider Name

Treatment Provider Qualifications (License Number, Certification, Degree, if applicable)

Address

Phone

Email

Signature

Date