

Emotional Support Animal Guidelines

Background and Overview

An emotional support animal (ESA) is an animal that provides comfort, companionship, or emotional support to assist with symptom management or relief for an individual with a mental health disability. Emotional support animals are not service animals. Carnegie Mellon University complies with the Fair Housing Act and recognizes the assistance that an ESA may provide in allowing a student with a mental health disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy University housing. The below guidelines describe requirements that must be upheld in order for students approved for an ESA to maintain this approval, as well as some circumstances where ESA's may not be approved. Please also refer to the [ESA Approval Process document](#), which describes the process by which students with mental health disabilities may request approval to have an ESA in their on-campus residence as a reasonable accommodation. Note: These guidelines do not apply to service animals, defined as dogs individually trained to perform work or tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.

Student Responsibilities

- The student approved for the ESA, hereafter referred to as the owner, is financially and physically responsible for all care for the animal and may not delegate this to a roommate or other student living on campus at any time or for any reason. Students should take their current and future schedule and demands on their time into account when considering whether they have adequate time and resources to care for an ESA.
- If the owner must leave campus overnight or is otherwise unable to care for the animal, the ESA must be relocated off campus, either with the owner or in the care of someone the owner has designated for this purpose. The owner must provide Disability Resources with the off campus caretaker's contact information and is responsible for updating this information if it changes. If the owner experiences a medical emergency and is incapacitated, CMU reserves the right to transport the animal off campus, either to the owner's designated caretaker or, if that person is unavailable, to a boarding facility at the owner's expense.
- The owner is responsible for all solid waste clean-up and removal. Waste must be disposed of in outside trash receptacles. Students should bear in mind that an outside trash receptacle may be some distance from their residence.
- The owner is responsible for ensuring that the animal does not cause a disruption to others or demonstrate aggressive or destructive behavior. Students are strongly encouraged to choose an ESA carefully to minimize the chance of adopting an animal that is likely to be disruptive, destructive, or aggressive. The owner will be held financially responsible for any injury or damage to CMU property or property of other students caused by the ESA. This may include replacement of floor coverings if the animal eliminates waste on those floor coverings.
- Unless explicitly noted otherwise by the Office of Disability Resources, the ESA is only permitted in the owner's residence. ESA's are not permitted in other buildings on campus such as academic, athletic, or administrative buildings unless explicitly approved by the Office of Disability Resources.

- Unless explicitly noted otherwise by the Office of Disability Resources, the animal must remain in the owner's bedroom except when entering or leaving the building. ESA's are not permitted in other students' bedrooms or common areas.
- When entering or exiting the building or outside on university property, the ESA must remain under the owner's control at all times and must be on leash or kept in a secure cage or carrier.
- ESA dogs and cats must be spayed or neutered.
- ESA dogs must be housebroken, and ESA cats or rabbits must be litterbox-trained.
- The owner must submit proof of a completed wellness examination by a licensed veterinarian within thirty days of the animal residing in on-campus housing. The exam must include proof of all legally required and veterinarian-recommended vaccinations, spaying/neutering (as applicable), and a review of the animal's age, weight, and overall health.
- Dogs must wear a valid dog license and rabies tag. Cats must wear a valid rabies tag. All animals must wear a tag, or be chipped if tagging is not anatomically possible, bearing the student's name and contact information.
- If the owner wishes to change to a different ESA than the one already approved by the Office of Disability Resources, the owner must request this change with Disability Resources. Requests to change ESA's are evaluated on a case by case basis. If the request is approved, the owner must submit the above-noted wellness exam within thirty days of the new animal residing in on-campus housing.
- The student must notify Disability Resources in writing if the animal is no longer needed or is no longer residing on CMU property.
- The owner is responsible for providing a safe and healthy living environment for the ESA. CMU reserves the right to contact Animal Control if concerns are raised as to the proper and safe treatment of the animal.
- Noncompliance with any of the above requirements may result in the ESA approval being revoked. Depending on the nature of the non-compliance or severity of the incident, the owner may be provided with a warning to assist them in addressing the issue. If the issue is not addressed in a timely manner, they may be required to remove the ESA with forty-eight hours' notice. If the lack of compliance results in a serious incident, the owner may be required to remove the ESA within forty-eight hours of the first infraction, with no warning provided. If the incident is related to a violation of CMU's community standards, policies, or regulations, the incident may be referred to the Office of Community Standards and Integrity for review, and disciplinary action may be taken against the owner if appropriate.
- The owner must be compliant with the City of Pittsburgh pet owner requirements, to be found at <http://pittsburghpa.gov/publicsafety/animal-control/pet-owners.html>

Limitations

- Students approved for an ESA are only permitted one animal in on-campus residence, regardless of the size of the animal. It is recommended that students choose a type of animal that does not need to reside with other animals.
- Only one ESA will generally be approved to reside in a given housing unit. If the student requesting an ESA shares a room, suite, apartment, or Greek housing with another student already approved for an ESA, the student may request the assistance of Housing Services in

finding an alternative housing arrangement. Note that housing on campus is limited, so alternative housing may not be available. If alternative housing is available, but is more costly than the student's current housing, the student is financially responsible for the increased cost.

- The keeping of an unapproved animal is grounds for termination of the lease, as applicable.
- Depending on the size and type of animal, Disability Resources may require that the animal be caged or crated whenever the owner leaves the residence. This is to ensure the safety of the animal if CMU staff such as maintenance workers or housing staff must enter the residence in the owner's absence.
- Space in on-campus residences is limited. While a student may receive approval from Disability Resources to have an ESA in general, the office reserves the right to disallow a specific animal due to the animal's size.
- CMU is not responsible for the animal while on campus, including any injury that may occur to or be caused by the animal.
- While a student may receive approval for an ESA in general, animals who, by their nature, are likely to cause a threat to health, disruption, or escape from the owner's residence may be denied. Examples include ferrets due to a strong natural odor, poisonous or constrictor snakes, or some small rodents and reptiles due to their ability to fit through small spaces and escape.
- Puppies or kittens under six months of age will not generally be approved as ESA's and must be spayed or neutered if approval is granted.