

# Emotional Support Animals (ESA) Procedures

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), the Office of Accessibility at The University of Akron engages in an interactive and collaborative process with students in order to determine eligibility for reasonable accommodations, including the use of an Emotional Support Animals (ESA)

The University of Akron is committed to granting reasonable accommodations to its rules, policies, practices, or services when such accommodations may be necessary to afford people with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy their dwellings, as required by federal, state and local law. A reasonable accommodation may include a change or exception to a rule or policy that is needed because of a person's disability, or it may be a physical change to a unit or common area.

## Emotional Support Animals (ESA)

The University of Akron Residence Hall Policy prohibits individuals from having animals other than aquarium fish, which can be kept in residence hall rooms or apartments, in any type of University housing, unless an exception applies. The University of Akron will consider a request by an individual with a disability for a reasonable accommodation from this prohibition to allow an ESA

## I. DEFINITIONS

### Emotional Support Animals

Emotional Support Animals or ESAs are a category of animals that may provide a therapeutic benefit to its owner through companionship. The animal provides emotional support and comfort to individuals with a mental or psychiatric disability. An ESA alleviates one or more identified symptoms of an individual's disability but are not considered Service Animals under the ADAAA. Some ESAs are professionally trained, but in other cases ESAs provide the necessary support to individuals with disabilities without any formal training or certification. Dogs or cats are commonly used as ESAs, but any animal may serve as an ESA to a person with a disability.

### Owner

The "Owner" is the individual who has requested the accommodation and has received approval to bring an ESA into University Housing.

## II. ESA Requests

The University of Akron does not permit pets in the residence halls. The University provides reasonable accommodations to owners who have a documented disability.

Please Note: During high volume times students should anticipate a longer wait time for an appointment to be scheduled with their disability specialist. Services will NOT be denied if requests are made after this time, but they will be significantly longer to implement. An ESA may be permitted to reside with their owner in the owner's on-campus residence if the following criteria is met:

1. An ESA is prescribed by a healthcare or mental health professional to an individual with a disability and is an integral part of the person's treatment plan. However, the University will not permit an ESA in the residence halls that poses a threat to the health or safety of others; would cause substantial physical damage to University property or property of others; or results in a fundamental alteration of the University's residence life program.
2. Students who wish to utilize an Emotional Support Animal housing accommodation should complete the Office of Accessibility Application and provide substantial documentation of disability. The owner is responsible for having an appropriate treating professional complete the *Guidelines for Documentation Emotional Support Animals (ESA)* and submitting the completed form to the online application. At the time of application submission, the owner must upload an identifiable photo of the ESA. The University of Akron has the right to request additional clarification or documentation of disability. The form can be found [here](#)

Life and Housing. Please note the University holds the right to share this information with pertinent University personnel who may come into contact with the owner and ESA. This may include, but is not limited to, RLH staff, University Police, the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety, Department of Physical Facilities, etc.

The University encourages owners and their treatment providers to explore all other suitable reasonable accommodations other than having an ESA reside with the owner in a residence hall. When there is a compelling reason to permit the use of an ESA, the University encourages owners to use ESAs that can reasonably be caged or otherwise contained. As previously noted, there are not specific restrictions on ESA weight and size, however the emotional support animal's required crate must be able to comfortably fit within the living space of the assigned room without blocking ingress and allow for safe egress in case of an emergency. The size of the crate must be appropriately sized for the ESA. According to the Human Society, the animal's crate should be large enough for them to stand up and turn around in. If your emotional support animal is still growing, choose a crate size that will accommodate their adult size.

safety of the campus community will not be permitted as ESAs. Where there are not specific restrictions on ESA weight and size, the required date must be able to comfortably within the living space of the assigned room, allowing for safe egress in case of an emergency. Further, City of Akron Code Chapter 92 has restrictions on animals and breeds that can be within city limits. Prior to submitting the housing letter and bringing the ESA into the residence halls, the student must submit proof of valid license. The owner will be required to submit proof

not be left overnight in University housing to be cared for by any individual other than the owner. If the owner is to be absent from his/her University housing overnight or longer, the emotional support animal must accompany the owner. The owner is responsible for ensuring the ESAs contained, as appropriate, when the owner is not present during the day while attending classes, work or other activities.

- x Ensure the ESA has a designated emergency care provider in place, at all times. The owner is required to ensure that the ESA can be placed with and cared for by an emergency care provider, in the event they are unable to care for or remain with their ESA on campus. In any situation, regardless of the circumstances, the burden of care cannot be placed on a UA employee or other student resident. The identified emergency care provider must be an individual who does not live within the residence halls, and must be designated by the owner and established prior to bringing the animal on campus. Both the owner and the emergency care provider must agree to the arrangement, and acknowledge the terms and conditions, by signing the ESA Emergency Care Provider Authorization Form. The authorization form as well as a photo of the designated emergency care provider must be submitted to the Office of Accessibility, prior to or at the time of the scheduled Intake appointment. Upon receiving these documents, they will be shared with Residence Life and Housing, in addition to any other pertinent information. In cases of an emergency situation that interferes with the owner's ability to care for the emotional support animal, the emergency care provider may be contacted by University designees. Representatives from Residence Life & Housing, the Office of Accessibility, or UAPD may be among the individuals who contact the owner. In most cases, the responsibilities of contacting and transferring the care of the ESA to the designated emergency care provider, will be assumed by the owner. The emergency care provider is expected to take on temporary guardianship and care of the ESA, within 24 hours of being contacted by the owner or University designees. In the event the designated emergency care provider can no longer uphold the responsibilities

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reason, the owner is expected to fulfill his/her housing obligations for the remainder of the housing contract