

Emotional Support Animal Documentation Guidance For Healthcare Providers

Institutional Context:

The Americans with Disabilities Act gives particular status to Service Animals (a dog that performs a task on cue that partially mitigates an impact of the disability). It does not preclude a request for an emotional support animal whose presence (passive with no specific cued behavior but verifiably reduces the impact of a disability through its relationship with the owner) is an accommodation to a standing “no pets” policy.

Students seeking an ESA in the residential or classroom must register with Student Life Disability Services (SLDS) to have their request evaluated. This process requires students to submit their personal narrative describing the reasons for their request and a letter from their provider. This letter is meant to confirm diagnoses and provide additional context about the student’s disability, along with the reasons for an ESA.

The Student Life Disability Services staff must understand the specific ways in which the ESA is providing necessary support for the student and the potential impact of not having the ESA.

Content for Letter of Support

As a clinician, you should be diligent in following your professional training, scope of practice, and ethics. Use your professional judgment regarding the student’s health status and related needs. SLDS evaluates students’ requests for emotional support animals in university spaces. Below is the information the university is looking for when evaluating an individual’s request for an ESA. Please provide a detailed letter that includes the following:

- 1. Your credentials and how long you have provided care for the student.**
 - a. What is your principal clinical relationship with the individual?
- 2. The student’s diagnosis and date of diagnosis.**
 - a. Does the student’s diagnosis meet the criteria for disability as defined in the ADA?¹
- 3. Explain how the animal helps alleviate the impact of the condition.** For example, is it the long-term relationship that has a broad and diffuse impact that reduces the overall level of symptoms? Is it interactions in moments of high stress? (Please give an example.)
- 4. Are there specific negative impacts of the person's not having the animal with them:**
 - a. In residence/living space?
 - b. In specific situations or contexts (pride the situations or contexts)?
 - c. When separated for short periods of time? (Please describe the time period e.g. cannot be separated at all, not for more than 3 hours, for more than 8 hours, overnight, etc.)
- 5. Your signature, digital (timestamped) or wet.**

1 The legal definition of disability is a mental or physical condition that substantially limits a major life activity compared to most people. Substantial in this context is somewhat subjective but means a notable, significant, meaningful limit/difference to the manner in which the individual engages in the activity, the conditions necessary for them to engage in the activity, the duration for which they can engage in the activity or the frequency which they engage in the activity. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and the proper functioning of major bodily systems.