



Emotional Support Animal Policy in Residential Housing for Students

Kennesaw State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and an accessible environment for qualified students with disabilities. The University complies with all applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Fair Housing Act (FHA). Kennesaw State University will permit Emotional Support Animals (ESA) in campus-affiliated residential housing as a reasonable accommodation after the University's policies regarding a determination of disability has been completed and components of the Emotional Support Animal (ESA) determination process have been approved.

Background

Under the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and Section 504, individuals with a disability may be entitled to keep an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) as a reasonable accommodation in campus housing facilities that otherwise impose restrictions or have prohibitions on non-service animals in residence. In order for a student with a disability to qualify for such an accommodation, documentation of a condition that rises to the level of a disability must be submitted which establishes the need for the therapeutic nature of the animal that is connected to the individual's disability. There must be a relationship, or nexus, between the individual's disability and the assistance the animal provides. Further, documentation must establish that the Emotional Support Animal is necessary to afford the individual with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling or to participate in the housing program.

Unlike a service animal, an ESA does not need to be trained to provide a service or task and does not accompany the person with a disability at all times. To summarize, a student may qualify for this accommodation if:

- the student has a documented disorder that rises to the level of a disability;
- the animal is necessary to afford the student with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy their dwelling; and
- there is an identifiable and documented nexus between the disability and the assistance that the animal provides. The University will allow only those ESAs that are allowed by local and state laws and conform to standards within these laws.



Student Disability Services

Definition of Emotional Support Animal

An emotional support or comfort animal is not a pet. An Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is one that can be kept in residence as prescribed for a person with a disability as a reasonable accommodation to provide him/her an equal opportunity to use and enjoy campus housing. Such requirement must be documented by a medical and/or a mental health professional as needed due to one or more identified symptoms or effects of the person's disability. Typically, an emotional support animal is prescribed to an individual with a disability by a licensed physician with training in the area of the person's disability and is an integral part of a person's treatment process.

Process and Procedures

Students must receive approval to have an Emotional Support Animal in residential housing through Student Disability Services (SDS). The SDS Assistant Director and/or Director will review documentation, make determinations, and communicate with the appropriate members of Residence Life. Like all disability accommodations, the determination of whether or not an ESA will be permitted in on-campus housing is made on a case-by-case basis through an interactive process between the student and Student Disability Services. Once approved, SDS will notify the Residence Life Office. A Residential Life staff member will contact the student to discuss the residential life options based on the documented needs related to the emotional support animal and any other housing accommodations approved through the process. Students should be aware that housing options may be limited as the University balances appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities with students who have allergies and/or animal fears. Consequently, advance notice (as soon as possible) of the need for an animal is essential to the University providing a smooth transition for the student.

ESAs are generally not allowed to accompany persons with disabilities in all public areas of Kennesaw State as a service animal is allowed to do. Instead, an ESA may reside in college housing, including accompanying the person in public or common areas of the person's housing when it may be necessary to afford the person with a disability equal opportunity to use and participate in the college housing program.

Other Important Information Related to Emotional Support Animals

The care and supervision of the ESA is solely the responsibility of the student owner. The student must be in full control of the ESA at all times. ESAs may not pose a direct threat to the health and safety of persons on the college campus, cause physical damage to property, or fundamentally alter the nature of the College operations. The ESA must be maintained (kept clean, free from fleas or ticks, etc.) and may not create safety hazards for other people.