

Emotional Support Animal Guidelines

Willamette University is committed to making reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Accordingly, people with disabilities who are determined eligible for an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) are permitted to be accompanied by their animal in their campus room or apartment. Only students with disabilities are eligible for this exception to the pet policy.

A student may qualify for this accommodation if: (1) the student has a documented disability; (2) the animal is necessary to afford the student with the disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy their dwelling; (3) there is an identifiable and documented nexus between the disability and the assistance that the animal provides.

I. Definitions

Assistance Animal: An assistance animal is an animal that works, provides assistance, or performs tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, or provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. Assistance animals perform many disability-related functions, including but not limited to, guiding individuals who are blind or have low vision, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to sounds, providing protection or rescue assistance, pulling a wheelchair, fetching items, alerting persons to impending seizures, or providing emotional support to persons with disabilities who have a disability-related need for such support. Assistance animals are not pets.

Emotional Support Animal (ESA): An emotional support animal is a type of assistance animal that provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. An Emotional Support Animal is not a pet.

II. Procedure for Requesting Emotional Support Animals in University Housing

Step 1: If you are considering an ESA, review this document thoroughly, including the resources on responsible animal ownership. After review, consider talking with your Area Coordinator to discuss the responsibilities of successful ESA ownership in a university residence. You are not expected nor advised to disclose your disability to your Area Coordinator.

Step 2: Make an appointment with Accessible Education Services (AES) in Smullin 155 (call us at 503-370-6737 or email accessible-info@willamette.edu). This [Eligibility Form](#) must be completed by your health care provider. Please note that letters purchased from the internet for a set price rarely provide the information necessary to support an ESA request. Return the form to AES for review by the Disability Housing Accommodation Committee. We are usually able to make a determination within a week during the academic calendar; during school breaks it may take longer.

Step 3: If you are determined to be eligible by the Disability Housing Accommodation Committee, you will be asked to read and sign an *Owner Responsibilities in Campus Residences* agreement and complete an ESA Registration Form, where you will be asked for a picture of the animal and its crate. View samples of those forms [here](#) to learn what information you will need to provide:

- [ESA Owner Responsibilities in Campus Residences](#) agreement
- [ESA Registration](#) form, along with a picture of the animal and its crate.

Step 4: Housing will ask that you meet with your Area Coordinator to determine the animal's move-in date.

When considering an ESA, please keep in mind that live feeders are prohibited in University residence halls. ESAs must be under the complete control of the handler at all times. All ESAs must be housebroken and have all appropriate vaccinations and licenses.

III. Areas Off Limits to Emotional Support Animals

Emotional support animals are allowed in a student's campus room or apartment. Outside of their room, students must comply with the Willamette University [Animals on Campus policy](#). Students who have a disability-related need to bring their ESA to areas where it is not allowed according to the Dogs on Campus policy should make an appointment with Accessible Education Services to discuss the need for an accommodation.

IV. Conflicting Disabilities and/or Medical Conditions

A student with a disability and/or medical condition that is affected by animals should contact Accessible Education Services if he or she has a health or safety-related concern about exposure to a service animal. The person asserting the conflicting disability and/or medical condition must provide appropriate medical documentation that identifies the condition(s) and the need for an accommodation. Appropriate action under federal and state law will be taken to consider the needs of all persons involved and to resolve the conflict as efficiently and effectively as possible.

V. Decision Review Process

If you feel that you were denied this accommodation, a request for a decision review can be made by following the Decision Review procedures available on the [Accessible Education Services website](#) and in the main office in Smullin 155. If you have further questions, please contact the Director of Accessible Education Services at 503-370-6737.

Reference Material:

Federal Laws:

- [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity](#)
- [U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division – Service Animals](#)

Caring for Animals:

- [Questions to ask yourself before getting a pet](#)
- [American Kennel Club: Be a Responsible Dog Owner](#)
- [Guidelines for Responsible Pet Ownership from the American Veterinary Medical Foundation](#)
- [Transitioning an animal to a new home](#)

Licensing and Vaccinations:

- [Dog licensing in Marion County](#)
- [State of Oregon animal vaccination laws](#)

Making an Informed Decision

Evidence shows that Emotional Support Animals can provide therapeutic benefits to their owners. Nonetheless, taking care of an animal is a big responsibility - the owner is accountable for the life and well-being of the animal. Factors such as type of animal, breed, and age of animal all play a role in the type and amount of care an animal needs. Before choosing an Emotional Support Animal, we advise that you become well informed on the responsibilities that come with animal ownership.

You may review these questions with Area Coordinators as you consider bringing an animal into your residence hall:

1. What type of animal do I want to get? What are the needs of this animal, and how will my lifestyle allow me to care for the animal?
2. Just as humans take time to adjust to a new place to live, animals also need support as they transition to a new home. How will I help my animal feel comfortable living in my room when it first arrives? Where will its supplies (bed, toys, food, etc.) be placed? Will it need to stay in a crate for most of the day? What behaviors might this animal exhibit if it is distressed and how will I address them?
3. How long am I away from my room during the day? Where will the animal be kept when I'm not home? Will I need to change the amount of time I am away in order to care for the animal? Do I plan to study abroad or travel in the near future? What will I do with my animal at those times?
4. How big will my animal grow? Does my living space fit the needs of the animal? How much exercise will my animal need, and how will I ensure it gets enough exercise?
5. How long is my animal's average lifespan? Am I prepared to care for the animal for its entire life? What responsibilities come with a commitment to long term care of the animal?
6. What supplies will I need to purchase for my animal? Have I budgeted enough to make those purchases? Do I have a plan in place if my animal needs emergency veterinary care?
7. What resources will I use to learn more about caring for my animal?