EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

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www.fau.edu/sas
*Alternate format is available upon request.
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

Florida Atlantic University (FAU) makes every reasonable effort to accommodate individuals with disabilities in need of an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) as addressed by the Fair Housing Act (FHA). ESAs, also referred to as Therapy Animals or Comfort Animals, provide a measure of support and comfort to individuals with qualifying disabilities. ESAs are a prescribed part of therapy for emotional and psychological disabilities and serve to alleviate symptoms of the disability.

There is much confusion about the role of ESAs, and they are often mistaken for Service Animals. ESAs are not considered service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. ESAs provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and can help to reduce symptoms of documented psychiatric disabilities and mental impairments. ESAs differ from service animals in that they do not have special training to perform specific tasks to assist people with disabilities.

Unlike a service animal that has access to public places where pets are not typically allowed, an ESA has limited access to places of public accommodation. Under the FHA, an ESA is viewed as a reasonable accommodation in a housing unit that has a no pet policy for its residents. Residence halls are considered as part of the FHA. Therefore, approved ESAs are allowed in residence halls but are restricted to a student’s room and can only leave for nature breaks. ESAs are not allowed in classrooms, campus buildings, common rooms or areas in the residence halls, or campus events. ESAs must be under the control of their owner at all times, cannot be left alone overnight, and cannot be cared for by another student.

### SERVICE ANIMALS VERSUS EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Animals</th>
<th>Emotional Support Animals (ESA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dogs or miniature horses.</td>
<td>Species not defined. Can be any species but typically is a dog or a cat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assists a person with a disability by performing a specific task</td>
<td>Alleviates symptoms of a disability, usually a psychological disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained to perform a specific task by a specialized organization</td>
<td>Not trained for a specific task by a specialized organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not need to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS)</td>
<td>Does need to register with SAS by submitting an Application for Academic Accommodations, documentation (clearly linking the ESA to the disability), and completing an intake appointment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be eligible for academic accommodations. If academic accommodations are requested, must register with SAS.</td>
<td>May be eligible for academic accommodations. If academic accommodations are requested, must register with SAS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlimited campus access.</td>
<td>Restricted campus access. Limited to residence hall room. May leave room only for nature breaks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must be under the owner’s control at all times.</td>
<td>Must be under the owner’s control at all times. ESA care must be provided solely by the owner. ESA cannot be left alone or with anyone else overnight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide for your ESA’s health care and daily needs.
- Your ESA must be under your control at all times.
- You are the sole care provider for your ESA. No one else should care for your ESA.
- Your ESA should not be left alone except for classes and academic-related activities. They should not be left alone overnight, weekends or holidays.
- Clean up after your ESA’s nature breaks.
- Any damages caused by your ESA is your financial responsibility.
- Since ESAs are not services animals, they are not permitted in public places where animals are not allowed. ESAs must stay in your residence hall room and must not leave your room except for nature breaks. ESAs are not allowed anywhere else on campus including other areas in your resident hall, e.g., hallways, common areas, other dorm rooms, classrooms, or campus buildings.

REQUEST AN ESA

To request an ESA, a student must first be accepted to the University and then must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS).

Deadlines

Deadlines to apply for an ESA / housing accommodation are June 1 for the fall semester and November 1 for the spring semester. After these dates, applications are accepted, but FAU cannot guarantee the accommodation request can be met, even with proper documentation. Housing accommodations are subject to room availability. Please review the Housing brochure located on the SAS website: http://www.fau.edu/sas/Brochures.php.

Registering with SAS

There are two steps to registering with SAS:
2. Submit adequate documentation of your disability with the application. IEPs, 504 plans, or information on a prescription pad are not acceptable as documentation. Please note: Documentation requirements are firm.

“A person who knowingly and fraudulently represents herself or himself, through conduct or verbal or written notice, as using a service animal and being qualified to use a service animal or as a trainer of a service animal commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 217 775.083 and must perform 30 hours of community service for an organization that serves individuals with disabilities, or for another entity or organization at the discretion of the court, to be completed in not more than 1 year.”
**DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS**

- Must be in the form of a letter or report from a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist or licensed clinical social worker. For example, a pediatrician or a family doctor would not be an appropriate clinician to provide documentation for an ESA. Documentation from other clinicians/providers is not accepted.
- The documentation must be on official letterhead and should be signed and dated within the last two years.
- Include a specific diagnosis, a statement of the student’s current condition, the date and a summary of the most recent evaluation, and the expected duration of the condition.
- State the current impact of, or functional limitations, imposed by the condition on the student’s living situation.
- Explain how the condition relates to the student’s request for an ESA. There must be a direct link established between the functional limitations of the condition and the requested ESA. This should include which symptoms are alleviated by the ESA.
- Clearly state a specific recommendation for an ESA as a result of the condition.
- Include evidence the provider is currently treating the student for the condition for which the ESA is requested.

**APPLICATION REVIEW**

Once the Application for Academic Accommodations and documentation are submitted, they will be reviewed by SAS. Incomplete applications are not accepted. The student will be notified if any documentation is missing and will be asked to submit additional documentation to meet the requirements. The cost for obtaining appropriate documentation is the student’s responsibility.

If the documentation requirements are met and the Application is complete, the student will meet with an SAS consultant for a collaborative interview to discuss the ESA request and possible academic accommodations.

Please refer to the Housing brochure on the SAS website for more information: [www.fau.edu/sas/Brochures.php](http://www.fau.edu/sas/Brochures.php)

**HOUSING ASSIGNMENT**

If the ESA request is approved, SAS will write a letter to the Department of Housing and Residential Life (DHRL) specifying a recommendation of an ESA. DHRL will then determine a specific room assignment. There is no need to reapply every year for an ESA accommodation, though the student’s room assignment may change from year-to-year. SAS has no influence on a specific room, residence hall, or roommate assignment. DHRL should be contacted for questions or concerns about a specific room assignment and/or a housing contract.

**IMPORTANT:** To ensure appropriate documentation is submitted, you are required to request that your clinician complete the ESA Verification Form available from SAS or on the SAS website at [http://www.fau.edu/sas/Forms.php](http://www.fau.edu/sas/Forms.php).

It may take one to two weeks for the Application for Academic Accommodations to be processed, even with adequate documentation. If the documentation submitted is inadequate, the processing time will increase.