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COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

## ESA Checklist

Below is a checklist to assist you with your request for an ESA to reside with you on campus. The following items must be collected and available to UDS before a meeting date will be set:

### Documents/Information needed:

- Signed Acknowledgement of University Disability Services - Campus Animal Procedure
- ESA Disability Verification Form
- ESA Veterinary Verification
- Vaccination list from Veterinary Office
- Spayed/neutered certificate (or note from veterinarian), if applicable
- ESA photo



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## COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

### University Disability Services – Campus Animal Procedure

#### I. **GUIDELINES STATEMENT**

The Commonwealth University recognizes the importance of “Emotional Support Animals” (ESAs), to individuals with disabilities and has established these guidelines to govern the presence of these animals in University housing. In order to be eligible for an ESA, an individual must have a medical diagnosis that **substantially limits** one or more major life activities, which has been diagnosed by a trained and licensed clinician or primary care physician (PCP). This refers only to the University’s regulations and procedures for Emotional Support Animals and does not apply to animals that are “therapy dogs,” which are trained to provide therapy or comfort to people other than their handlers or to “SERVICE ANIMALS” which provide a trained and specialized service to their owner. \*Lock Haven permits pets on campus in Smith Hall. Mansfield and Bloomsburg do not permit pets. However, SERVICE ANIMALS, SERVICE ANIMALS In-Training, and Emotional Support Animals could be approved through appropriate conversation and documentation through the University Disability Services Office (hereafter, “UDS”).

#### II. **RATIONALE**

The Commonwealth University values equality of opportunity, diversity among the University community and belonging and is committed to providing **reasonable** accommodations to all members of the University community who have documented disabilities. Students with significant mental health or psychiatric disabilities may require reasonable accommodations that allows for the provision of an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) in order to have equal access to use and to fully and completely enjoy the residential facilities of the University. These guidelines comply with requirements directed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Fair Housing Act (FHA)

#### III. **ENTITIES AFFECTED BY THESE GUIDELINES**

These guidelines apply to students who reside in University owned or operated housing.

#### IV. **DEFINITIONS**

**Emotional Support Animal (ESA):** According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and its Fair Housing Act (FHA), an Emotional Support Animal is an animal that provides emotional support, comfort and companionship to alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person’s disability. Unlike SERVICE ANIMALS, protected under the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA) and are trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities, ESAs are not trained to perform any specific disability related tasks or services.

**Pet:** A pet is an animal kept for pleasure and companionship; pets often provide emotional support for their owners. A pet is distinguished from an ESA because a pet's emotional support is not necessary to alleviate one or more identified symptoms or effects of an individual's disability. A pet is neither an ESA nor a SERVICE ANIMAL. Pets cannot reside on university property, with the exception of Smith Hall at Lock Haven, and are not permitted inside any university buildings without authorization.

**Therapy Animals:** Therapy animals are only allowed when explicitly connected to the course or discipline (i.e.,

courses in animal assisted interventions within specified courses or departments) and with pre-approval from the faculty member, department, and University Disability Services Office (hereafter, "UDS"). They typically accompany their handlers into nursing homes or hospitals. Therapy animals do not have public access rights.

**Therapy Animals are not a form of accommodation.**

**SERVICE ANIMALS:** SERVICE ANIMALS are allowed to accompany their handlers in residences and any public spaces where their handlers are permitted, including University classrooms, laboratories, studios, and other classroom meeting places. SERVICE ANIMALS do have public access rights. If a SERVICE ANIMAL's role is not apparent by observation, it is permissible to ask the handler: **"Is the animal supplying a service because of a disability?" and "What service does the animal provide?"** One may **NEVER** ask for documentation of a SERVICE ANIMAL or ask them to wear identification.

**Reptile Animals:** If a reptile is being considered as an ESA, they must have a yearly vet visit to ensure they are free from disease and tempered to live in a community setting. Also, snakes and other reptiles (excluding bearded dragons) are to remain in their cages AT ALL TIMES, so please consider this when thinking of what your needs from the ESA would entail.

## V. **PROCEDURES**

### **Requesting Emotional Support Animals in University Housing**

Students who would like to inquire about an ESA should contact University Disability Services (UDS) Office through the Accommodate website. Once this is done, UDS staff will email the student the necessary paperwork for the next steps. The student will also be advised of the University Disability Services – Campus Animal Procedure, the owner's responsibilities and the requirements and expectations they will be expected to uphold. The AD will also go over housing expectations and guidelines with the student. ESA accommodations are approved on a case-by-case basis and are only approved when the interactive process shows it to be an appropriate and reasonable accommodation.

In most cases the approval process follows the steps outlined below:

1. Complete the Initial Accommodation Request Form through Accommodate, including documentation
2. Meet with the AD to complete the interactive process, review approved documentation, discuss appropriate, fair and reasonable accommodations.
3. Review the guidelines, requirements and expectations of having an ESA
4. If approved, the student must complete and sign the ESA Rules and Expectations Agreement.
5. UDS will send approval notice and required documentation to Housing and Residence Life for housing assignments.

In order to fulfill the intent of the FHA requirements in providing support to the student with a medical diagnosis, a student is only approved to have **ONE** ESA. Students who would like to request an ESA should do so as soon as possible, as well as having a conversation with their roommate(s) about going through the process. The University will accept and consider all requests for an ESA in University housing at any time.

If the need for an ESA arises when an individual already resides in University housing, the student should contact UDS as soon as possible and begin the interactive process. When a request for an ESA is received, absent exceptional circumstance, the University will make every attempt to provide the accommodation within a timely manner. If the request is approved, the student will be expected to read and sign the Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Student Agreement and complete the registration process for the animal.

If the request is denied, the UDS office will discuss why and the student is expected to fulfill his/her housing obligations without an ESA for the remainder of the housing contract or residency requirement.

### **Required Medical Documentation**

UDS asks that individuals submit documentation of a medical diagnosis that **supports** the use of an ESA from an appropriately licensed medical professional who is treating the diagnosis. The documentation must be from a professional in the state of Pennsylvania or in the student's home state. Please note Commonwealth University does not require certificates or training for ESAs. Certificates purchased online will not be accepted in lieu of the documentation required by the UDS.

The student's provider should complete Commonwealth University's "Disability Verification Form" or write a letter on letterhead to include the appropriate information and submit it directly to the UDS for review. The student may also send it to the UDS office via Accommodate, mail, fax, or by dropping it off in the office. If the third-party returns the verification form without sufficient information for the AD to determine whether an accommodation is necessary, the AD will contact the student and make them aware of the insufficiency and may request additional information.

### **Considerations for Emotional Support Animals**

In some cases, it may be necessary for the UDS/AD to acknowledge the need for an ESA but deny the particular animal requested. For example, a particular animal may be denied based upon its size, if it is not housebroken, or if there have been aggressive or dangerous animal complaints brought in front of the courts.

The Commonwealth University, on each perspective campus, may have the right to assign individual's with ESAs to particular buildings or floors of housing buildings based upon each campus and their respective accommodations. The University reserves the right to make housing decisions that prevent the animal from being an administrative or financial burden on the University. Moreover, if roommates or suitemates have objections or aversions to sharing living quarters with an ESA, one or more parties may be asked to move to an alternate setting; such decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

### **Registry for Emotional Support Animals**

Any student looking to have an Emotional Support Animal **MUST** register the animal with the UDS **PRIOR** to bringing the animal to campus. Students can inquire about registration requirements and begin the process by contacting the campus UDS office.

Upon successful completion of the registration process, housing will be notified of the approval. Housing will also place an "Animal in Residence" tag on the door. This identification tag must remain there for the entire time period for which the ESA resides in University housing. University personnel may ask for proof of identification from the student if there is a question whether the animal is the approved ESA animal.

### **Requirements of Emotional Support Animal and their Owners**

The owner of an ESA is subject to Commonwealth University rules regarding Emotional Support Animals, as outline below:

- **STUDENT MUST demonstrate a 3 MONTH MINIMUM relationship with the ESA prior to requesting to bring one.**
- All dogs and cats are suggested to be **SPAYED OR NEUTERED as per good pet ownership expectations.**
- All dogs, cats and ferrets **must be updated on vaccinations.**

- The owner must keep the ESA in their immediate dwelling within the residence hall, except to the extent that the individual is taking the animal out for natural relief (if applicable) or outside for exercise. The immediate dwelling is considered to be the owner's personal space (i.e. dorm room/suite/bedroom). An ESA is **NOT** permitted in common areas or shared spaces within the residence hall (e.g. kitchens, living rooms, bathrooms, lounges, etc.) and are **NOT** permitted in other campus spaces, including but not limited to dining halls, academic buildings, University transportation or business buildings.
- UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should the owner leave the animal in the care of another student. An owner must crate/cage/contain their ESA whenever they have been given advance notice of Facilities/Residence Life staff entering the dwelling.
- An ESA may **NOT** be left alone for more than 10 hours (dog) or 15 hours (cat) or overnight in University housing to be cared for by another individual, student or staff.
- ESAs must be HOUSEBROKEN. Puppy pads for dogs are NOT acceptable. Animal waste should be disposed of in outside trash receptacles. Waste disposal utilizing University plumbing is prohibited.
- An ESA must be under the control of the owner at all times. Owners must use an animal carrier, leash, collar, and/or tether when taking the animal outside for natural relief (if applicable, or if going out for exercise). The owner must ensure that the animal does not display aggressive behavior to other students, staff, faculty and/or other animals on the University's campus.
- The owner MUST ensure that animal is well cared for and is in good health. It must be fed, well-groomed, clean and free of parasites, pests and diseases.
- If ESA is a reptile (excluding bearded dragons), they must remain in their cage **AT ALL TIMES.**
- The University is NOT responsible for the loss, injury or evacuation of an ESA in the event of an emergency.
- The Commonwealth University will not require the owner to pay any additional fees or surcharges due to having an ESA; the owner will only be responsible for fees that are typical for all individuals residing in on-campus housing. However, the owner is financially responsible for any and all actions of an ESA including, but not limited to, bodily injury, or property damage.

### **Conflicting Health Conditions**

Student with medication condition(s) that are affected by animals are asked to contact Housing and Residence Life if they have a health or safety related concern about exposure to an ESA. Commonwealth University Housing and Residence Life and UDS are also prepared to reasonably accommodate individuals with disabilities who will be impacted when living in proximity to ESAs.

### **Complaints/Concerns**

If students, faculty, or staff have concerns regarding an ESA in a residence hall or on a Commonwealth University campus, they should contact UDS and Housing and Residence Life directly.

Students, faculty or staff should immediately report any aggressive or disruptive behaviors of an ESA to the UDS and Housing and Residence Life. Any reports of animal abuse should also be reported immediately.

## **VI. SANCTIONS**

### **Removal of Emotional Support Animals**

If the owner fails to comply with any of the aforementioned responsibilities under these guidelines, the Commonwealth University may pursue the process for determining if an approved ESA should be removed from the University premises.

In the event that an ESA must be removed, it is the responsibility and at the expense of the owner to remove the animal from the University premises within 24 hours of being given notice; the owner may choose to give the animal to their emergency contact or another non-resident. If the owner fails to comply within the stated time frame, the University may surrender the animal to a local animal shelter, unless other arrangements have been made and can be verified.

Should the ESA be removed from the premises for any reason, the owner is expected to fulfill their housing obligation for the remainder of the housing contract or two-year residency requirement. Where an ESA is properly removed pursuant to these guidelines, Commonwealth University will work with the owner to determine reasonable alternative opportunities to participate in Housing and Residence Life Programs without having the animal on the premises. Commonwealth University reserves the right to make an interim accommodation while determining appropriate measures to address removal of the ESA.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Additionally, the owner of the ESA may be referred to the Office of Student Conduct/Office of Housing and Residence Life for review of the failure to comply and the assignment of appropriate sanctions. Penalties for violations will vary with the circumstances, but may include the imposition of fines, removal of ESA or other discipline as necessary.

### **Acknowledgement**

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read the Emotional Support Animal procedure, understand it, and agree to abide by its terms.

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Date

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Owner's Printed Name

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Owner's Signature  
(Required, even if a minor)

### **If Owner is under 18 years old:**

By signing below, you represent that you are the parent or legal guardian of the Owner, who is a minor. You acknowledge that you have read and understood the procedure and that you agree to abide by its terms.

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Date

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Parent/Guardian's Printed Name

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Parent/Guardian Signature

Commonwealth University reserves the right to modify these guidelines as needed, without prior notice. For additional information concerning the use of an ESA or other accommodations and services please contact University Disability Services on campus.



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This document has been modified from a resource provided by Disability Access Information and Support (DAIS), AHEAD and Dr. Jane Jarrow.

Emotional Support Animal Disability Verification Form

To consider the student’s request for an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) based on a disability or chronic health condition, Disability Services requires documentation from the student’s licensed clinical professional or health care provider thoroughly familiar with this student’s condition and their functional limitations and/or restrictions. All questions must be completed in full.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Status:  Current Student  Transfer Student  Prospective Student

If prospective, what semester and year are you beginning? \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number with area code: \_\_\_\_\_

University Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Check the Campus You Are Attending:

Bloomsburg UDS  
043 Warren Student Service Center  
400 East Second Street  
Bloomsburg, PA 17815  
Ph: (570) 389-4491 | Fax: (570) 389-5053  
UDSbloomsburg@commonwealthu.edu

Lock Haven UDS  
205 Ulmer Hall, Student Success Center  
401 North Fairview Street  
Lock Haven, PA 17745  
Ph: (570) 484-2665 | Fax: (570) 484-2894  
UDSlockhaven@commonwealthu.edu

Mansfield UDS  
147 South Hall  
31 South Academy Street  
Mansfield, PA 16932  
Ph: (570) 662-4150 | Fax: (570) 662-4149  
UDSmansfield@commonwealthu.edu

TO BE COMPLETED BY PROVIDER

For your convenience, and to assist you in completing this medical questionnaire, please review the Additional Information and Definitions, attached at the end of this document. Except for the effects of ordinary eyeglasses and contact lenses, answers should reflect the impact of the symptoms without regard to the ameliorative effects of mitigating measures such as those listed in the Additional Information and Definitions.



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1. How long has the student been in treatment with the provider/clinical professional? Please provide the diagnosis, whether it's physical or mental impairment, and the initial date of the diagnosis, as well as the most recent treatment date.

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2. Please provide the severity of this diagnosis/disorder.

- Mild       Moderate       Severe
- Chronic       Acute       Episodic

3. Is there a secondary diagnosis? If yes, what?

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4. Please state specifically the areas of the student's life that are significantly impacted or limited by the diagnosis. In other words, what exactly are the functional limitations of this diagnosis for this individual:

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5. If the recommendation for the accommodation is an ESA, are there other acceptable modalities of treatment, aside from an ESA, that could be provided? If yes, what?

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6. Please provide the symptoms of the diagnosis experienced by the student. State specifically what symptoms the accommodation of an ESA will alleviate and how it will affect the student and the impacted areas of his/her life. Is there an identifiable nexus between the disability and the assistance the animal provides?

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7. If the accommodation is an ESA, does the student have a condition that would prevent them from adequately caring for the ESA? (e.g. Could an individual with Major Depressive Disorder care for a dog if they lack sufficient motivation to walk the dog or take it outside to relieve itself? Or care for a cat or other animal?)

Four horizontal lines for writing an answer to question 7.

8. Does the requested accommodation remove the barrier caused by the diagnosis:

YES  NO

Please explain:

Four horizontal lines for explaining the answer to question 8.

Healthcare Provider Please fill in all fields:

Provider Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Provider Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

License or Certification #: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Horizontal line for address continuation.

Phone Number with area code: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax Number with area code: \_\_\_\_\_

## Additional Information and Definitions

Answers should reflect the impact of the symptoms when the patient's medical condition is in its active state without regard to the ameliorative effects of mitigating measures such as: medication; medical supplies; equipment or appliances; low-vision devices (devices that magnify, enhance or otherwise augment a visual image); prosthetics including limbs and devices; hearing aids and cochlear implants or other implantable hearing devices; mobility devices; oxygen therapy equipment and supplies; assistive technology; auxiliary aids or services (interpreters or other methods of making aurally delivered materials available to individuals with hearing impairments, qualified readers, taped texts, or other methods of making visually delivered materials available to individuals with visual impairments, acquisition or modification of equipment or devices); learned behavioral or adaptive neurological modifications.

**\*1. Physical or mental impairment** The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a physical or mental impairment as (1) any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculoskeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genito-urinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin and endocrine; or (2) any mental or psychological disorder, such as intellectual disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

**\*2. Substantially Limit** An impairment need not prevent or severely or significantly limit a major life activity to be considered substantially limiting. To have a disability an individual must be substantially limited in performing a major life activity as compared to most people in the general population.

**\*3. Major Life Activity** The phrase "major life activity" includes, but is not limited to, functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, sitting, seeing, hearing, eating, sleeping, walking, standing, lifting, bending, speaking, breathing, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating and working. Additionally, a "major life activity" also includes the operation of a major bodily function, including but not limited to functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.





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Within our campus housing, we have various sized spaces you may be placed in that can be as small as 100 sq ft. The animal may be placed in any of sized space, with or without roommates, based on the assignment of the student. For more details on CWU housing options, please visit Commonwealthu.edu

Based on your assessment of this animal and caretaker, do you feel the requested animal can appropriately reside in the described on-campus environment without detriment to the animal's health or wellbeing.

- YES, I feel the requested animal will successfully be able to live in a residence hall environment.
- NO, Please provide more information:

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Does the requested animal exhibit behaviors that could unduly interfere with the enjoyment of campus living facilities by roommates, suitemates and/or members of the college community.

- YES
- NO

Please provide more information:

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**\*\* Veterinary Signature Required \*\***

Clinic Name, Address, and Phone Number

Veterinarian Printed Name

Veterinarian Signature

Veterinarian License #

Date