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## Emotional Support Animals

Emotional Support Animals or ESAs are a category of animals that may provide a therapeutic benefit to its owner through companionship. The animal provides emotional support and comfort to individuals with a mental or psychiatric disability. An ESA alleviates one or more identified symptoms of an individual's disability but are not considered Service Animals under the ADA. Some ESAs are professionally trained, but in other cases ESAs provide the necessary support to individuals with disabilities without any formal training or certification.

An ESA is prescribed by a healthcare or mental health professional to an individual with a disability and is an integral part of the person's treatment plan. However, the University will not permit an ESA in the residence halls that poses a threat to the health or safety of others; would cause substantial physical damage to University property or to property of others; or results in a fundamental alteration of the University's residence life program.

The owner **must complete**

In all cases, **the owner of the approved ESA is fully responsible for the emotional support animal's behavior.** The removal of any animal, as well as any necessary excessive cleaning, repairs and/or pest control as a result of the ESA will be done at the expense of the owner who may also be subject to owner disciplinary action. Owners are responsible for any damage or injuries caused by their ESAs and must take appropriate precautions to prevent property damage or injury. The cost of care, arrangements, and responsibilities for the well-being of an ESA are the sole responsibility of the owner at all times. The University strongly recommends that owners consult with their insurance carrier regarding potential liability and insurance to cover such risks.

### **ESA Animal Type**

While most ESAs are dogs or cats, students are permitted to select a different ESA species. Dangerous, poisonous, illegal, and any other animals that pose a direct threat to the health and/or safety of the campus community will not be permitted as ESAs. While there are not specific restrictions on ESA weight and size, the required crate must be able to comfortably fit within the living space of the assigned room allowing for safe egress in case of an emergency. According to the Humane Society, the animal's crate should be large enough for them to stand up and turn around in. If your emotional support animal is still growing, choose a crate size that will accommodate their adult size. **Further, City of Akron Code Chapter 92 has restrictions on animals and breeds that can be within city limits. Prior to 12/6/15, the City of Akron had a ban on pit bulls, but that was overturned in 2015.**

Ensure the ESA is well cared for. The owner is required to ensure the emotional support animal is well cared for at all times. **Any evidence of mistreatment, abuse, neglect, or leaving the ESA unattended for unreasonably long periods of time may result in immediate removal of the ESA and/or discipline**

The animal or its presence creates an unmanageable disturbance or interference with the University community.