

University Housing Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Policy and Agreement

Although it is the policy of Eastern Illinois University (EIU) that residents are generally prohibited from having animals of any type in University housing, EIU will consider a request by a resident with a mental health disability for reasonable accommodation from this prohibition to allow the presence of an Emotional Support Animal (ESA). The University will consider such modification of policy, as mandated by the Fair Housing Act (FHA), in order to assure that the resident has an equal opportunity to use and benefit from EIU's housing program. This policy explains the specific requirements applicable to a resident's use of an ESA in University housing. EIU reserves the right to amend this Policy as circumstances require. This policy applies solely to ESAs that may be necessary in University housing. It does not apply to service animals, whose presence on campus is explained in the [EIU Service Animal Policy](#).

Definition: The University defines an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) as an animal that provides emotional, cognitive, or similar support and thus ameliorates the effects of a mental health disability. Unlike service animals that are trained to perform specific tasks that are important to the independence or safety of their disabled handler, ESAs are generally not trained to perform disability-specific tasks. Their therapeutic support is a function of their presence and interaction with the person with a disability. ESAs are not pets. This definition reflects the intent of both Federal and State resources. Any request to bring an animal into housing that is not a service animal, is not necessary for disability-related purposes, and does not fit this definition of ESA should be brought to the attention of Housing for individual review.

No ESA may be kept in University housing at any time prior to the resident receiving approval as a reasonable accommodation pursuant to this Policy. Animals found to be in residence prior to this formal approval must be removed immediately. Failure to abide by this restriction will be considered a violation of the Student Code of Conduct. If the unapproved animal is not removed within 48 hours of written notice from University Housing and Dining Services, the student will be charged \$50 per day until the animal is removed from campus.

Approval for having an ESA in residence is a two-step process. First, the resident must establish their need for an ESA. This will be determined through the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations (OAA) based on review of information shared by the resident, which includes documentation from the relevant health provider recommending the ESA.

Second, the resident must establish approval for the specific animal being requested. The resident may need to consider an alternative to the requested animal; this is at the discretion of University Housing and Dining Services and applicable policies. Generally, ESAs approved to reside in EIU housing are dogs or cats, but the University will consider requests for other commonly domesticated animals on a case-by-case basis. Dogs should be at least 10 months of age and cats should be at least 6 months of age. Cats and dogs should be spayed/neutered before being brought into University housing.

The presence of an ESA is assigned as a housing accommodation. All rules established for the assignment and support of housing accommodations under the University's general University Housing Reasonable Accommodation Policy apply to the presence of ESAs unless they are specifically contradicted in this policy.

Even if the resident with a disability establishes necessity for an ESA and it is allowed in University housing, an ESA is not permitted in other areas of the University (e.g. dining facilities, libraries, academic buildings, athletic buildings and facilities, classrooms, labs, individual centers, etc.). Permission to bring an animal approved as an ESA into other areas on campus will be considered under a separate process through the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations.

EIU will accept and consider requests for reasonable accommodation in University housing at any time. The resident making the request for accommodation should complete and provide the Emotional Support Animal Accommodation Request Form as soon as practicably possible before moving into University housing. However, if the request for accommodation is made fewer than 60 calendar days before the resident intends to move into University housing, EIU cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet the resident's accommodation needs during the first semester or term of occupancy.

If the need for an accommodation arises when a resident already resides in University housing, they should complete the Emotional Support Animal Accommodation Request Form as soon as practicably possible. EIU cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet the accommodation needs during the semester or term in which the request is received.

Procedures for Requesting an ESA in University Housing

The procedure for requesting an ESA follows the general procedures set forth in the University Housing Reasonable Accommodation Policy and the requirements set forth below. However, to the extent the requirements and procedures in this Policy conflict with the University Housing Reasonable Accommodation Policy, this Policy shall control.

Emotional Support Animals are not allowed into University housing until all of the following steps have been completed and the resident has official approval from the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations for the need of an ESA and official approval from University Housing and Dining Services to bring the specific animal to campus.

Stage 1: Review Policies, Submit Documentation to OAA

1. The resident **must** read both the Eastern Illinois University Housing Reasonable Accommodation Policy and the University Housing Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Policy and Agreement in full.
2. The Resident must provide the following documentation:
 - a. The Emotional Support Animal Accommodation Request Form
 - b. The Provider ESA Recommendation Form completed by a qualifying provider showing that the animal is prescribed as part of an ongoing treatment plan. The type of animal being prescribed should be indicated. Other documentation may be accepted, but EIU reserves the right to determine if the documentation provides sufficient information.
3. Upon review of documentation, the OAA director may meet with the resident to discuss the request if additional information is needed.

4. The request may be discussed with the Housing Accommodation Committee when necessary.
5. The resident will be notified by the OAA in writing via email if the request for an ESA has been recommended. A designated University Housing and Dining Services staff member will be copied on the notification.

A note about documentation: Under the Fair Housing Act, a housing provider may request reliable documentation when an individual is requesting the reasonable accommodation of an ESA and has a disability-related need for the accommodation that is not obvious or otherwise known.

Warning: Some websites sell letters of support, certificates, registrations, and licensing documents for ESAs to anyone who answers certain questions or participates in a short interview and pays a fee. Generally, such documentation from the internet is not, by itself, sufficient to reliably establish that an individual has a mental health disability or support the finding that there is a disability-related need for an ESA.

Stage 2: Review with University Housing and Dining Services Staff and Additional Documents

1. Once the need for an ESA has been recommended, the resident **must** meet with a designated representative from University Housing and Dining Services to discuss the appropriateness of the specific animal requested, review policies, and provide the following additional documentation:
 - a. A signed and dated copy of this document, the University Housing ESA Policy and Agreement
 - b. Records from a certified veterinarian with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, proof of spay/neuter, and information about the general health of the requested animal as applicable
 - c. The EIU Housing ESA Registration Form
 - d. Roommate/Suitemate Agreement (if applicable)
2. The request may be discussed with the Housing Accommodation Committee when necessary.

Stage 3: Animal May Come to Campus

1. Once all of the above steps have been completed and verified, University Housing and Dining Services will notify the resident in writing via email of the determination regarding the specific animal and give final approval.
2. If the specific animal requested has been approved, the animal may now come to campus.

Stage 4: Annual Renewal of ESA

Resident must submit the following documentation to University Housing and Dining Services by August 1st of the upcoming academic year in order to bring the approved ESA back to campus each Fall semester:

1. A statement from a relevant certified provider on official letterhead indicating the continued need for an ESA (the ESA Recommendation Form does not need to be completed again).
2. A new signed and dated copy of University Housing ESA Policy & Agreement
3. Records from a certified veterinarian with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, proof of spay/neuter, and information about the general health of the animal as applicable
4. The EIU Housing ESA Registration Form
5. Roommate/Suitemate Agreement (if applicable)

Failure to submit these documents on or before August 1 may result in a delay of the animal's return to campus.

Appeal:

If the need for an ESA has not been established and is denied by the OAA, the student may file an appeal following the process detailed here: [OAA Accommodation Determination Reconsideration and Appeal](#).

If the need has been established but the specific animal being requested has been determined to not be reasonable and is denied by University Housing and Dining Services, the student may file an appeal following the process for housing related appeals. Contact housing@eiu.edu for information regarding the appeal process.

If for any reason an approved ESA can no longer be on campus and the resident wishes to bring a different animal, the resident **must** contact University Housing and Dining Services to request approval for a different animal. A different animal than the ESA previously approved is not allowed in University housing until it has been approved to come to campus by University Housing and Dining Services.

Criteria for Determining if Presence of an ESA is Reasonable

1. The determination whether an ESA request constitutes a reasonable accommodation is made on an individual case-by-case basis in consultation between the Office of Accessibility & Accommodations and University Housing and Dining Services. A request for an ESA may be denied as unreasonable if the presence of the animal:
 - a. Imposes an undue financial and/or administrative burden to the University;
 - b. Fundamentally alters University housing policies; and/or
 - c. Poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others or would cause substantial property damage to the property of others, including University property.
2. In considering whether to approve an animal for residence, the University will consider the following:
 - a. The space needed for the cage/crate in which the animal will be housed is too large for available assigned housing space
 - b. The animal's presence is problematic for another individual living in housing (e.g. because of allergies or fears)
 - c. The animal's presence is disruptive to the housing environment for other residents (e.g., because of noise or odors)
 - d. The animal is not housebroken or is unable to live with others in a reasonable manner
 - e. The animal poses health risks from zoonotic diseases or safety concerns regarding containment that cannot be sufficiently mitigated for inclusion in the communal living setting
 - f. The animal's vaccinations are not up-to-date

- g. The animal poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the resident or others such as aggressive behavior towards or injuring the resident or others
- h. The animal causes or has caused excessive damage to University property beyond reasonable wear and tear

The ESA must be contained (cage/crate) when the resident is not in the room. The University reserves the right to inspect the cage/crate to determine space appropriateness and ensure proper containment of the animal.

EIU will not limit room assignments for individuals with an ESA to any particular building or buildings because the individual needs an ESA because of a disability.

Generally, only one animal will be approved to serve as an ESA for a resident.

Typically, only one animal may reside in a housing unit. If more than one resident in the same unit has a need for an ESA or a service animal, the University reserves the right to arrange for alternative housing for one of the residents. Roommate conflicts regarding the presence of an ESA will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Access to University Facilities by ESAs

1. An ESA must be contained within the resident's privately assigned individual living accommodations (e.g. room, suite, apartment) except to the extent the individual is taking the animal out for natural relief. When an ESA is outside the private individual living accommodations, it must be in an animal carrier or controlled by a leash or harness. ESAs are not allowed in any University facilities other than the University residence hall (e.g. dormitories, suites, apartments, etc.) to which the individual is assigned.
2. Dominion and Control: An ESA must be properly housed and restrained or otherwise under the dominion and control of the resident at all times. No resident shall permit the animal to go loose or run at large. If an animal is found running at large, the animal is subject to capture and confinement and immediate removal from University housing.

Resident's Responsibilities for an ESA

If the University grants a resident's request to live with an ESA, the resident is solely responsible for the custody and care of the ESA and must meet the following requirements:

1. The resident must abide by current city, county, and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to licensing, vaccination, and other requirements for animals. It is the resident's responsibility to know and understand these ordinances, laws, and regulations. The University has the right to require documentation of compliance with such ordinances, laws, and regulations, which may include a vaccination certificate. The University reserves the right to request documentation necessary to prove compliance with these regulations.
 - a. Dogs and cats **MUST** have proof of current rabies vaccination. A copy will be kept on file and must be kept current.
2. The resident is required to clean up after and properly dispose of the animal's waste in a safe and sanitary manner and, when provided, must use animal relief areas designated by EIU. Solid waste (such as cat litter) must be placed in a sturdy plastic bag and be taken directly to the dumpster. Animal waste should never be disposed of down the garbage chute.
3. The resident is required to ensure the animal is well cared for at all times. Any evidence of mistreatment or abuse may result in immediate removal of the ESA and/or discipline for the responsible individual.
4. EIU will not ask for or require an individual with a disability to pay a fee or surcharge for an approved ESA.
5. An individual with a disability may be charged for any damage caused by their ESA beyond reasonable wear and tear to the same extent that it charges other individuals for damages beyond reasonable wear and tear. The resident's living accommodations may also be inspected for fleas, ticks, or other pests if necessary as part of the University's standard routine of inspection. If fleas, ticks or other pests are detected through inspection, the residence will be treated using approved fumigation methods by University pest control. The resident will be billed for the expense of any pest treatment above and beyond standard pest management in the residence halls. The University shall have the right to bill the resident account for unmet obligations under this provision.

6. The resident must fully cooperate with University personnel with regard to meeting the terms of this Policy and developing procedures for care of the animal (e.g. cleaning the animal, feeding/water the animal, designating an outdoor relief area, disposing of feces, etc.).
7. The ESA may not be left overnight in University housing to be cared for by any individual other than the resident. If the resident is to be absent from their residence hall overnight or longer, the animal must be removed from campus. The resident is responsible for ensuring that the ESA is contained, as appropriate, when the resident is not present.
8. The resident agrees to abide by all equally applicable residential policies that are unrelated to the individual's disability such as assuring that the animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the residence or cause difficulties for individual who reside there. The resident must maintain control of the ESA at all times and must ensure the animal follows housing policies in regard to noise. Depending on the animal, regular grooming or bathing may be required to avoid significant odors, shedding, or pests. Animals are never to be bathed or groomed in community or public bathrooms or showers. The animal's cage/crate and accessories should also not be washed in communal bathroom facilities.
9. The ESA is allowed in University housing only as long as it is necessary because of the resident's disability. The resident must notify University Housing and Dining Services in writing if the ESA is no longer needed or is no longer in residence. To replace an ESA, the new animal must be necessary because of the resident's disability and the resident must follow the procedures in this Policy and the University Housing Reasonable Accommodation Policy when requesting a different animal. A different animal is not allowed into University housing until it has been approved.
10. EIU personnel shall not be required to provide care or food for any ESA including, but not limited to, removing the animal during emergency evacuation for events such as a fire alarm. Emergency personnel will determine whether to remove the animal and may not be held responsible for the care, damage to, or loss of the animal.
11. The resident must identify and provide contact information for an alternative caregiver/emergency contact who does not reside in University housing and who will be responsible for taking charge of the ESA should the resident be unable to care for the animal in the residence hall. The

caregiver/emergency contact must be available to remove the ESA from the residence within 8 hours of notification.

- a. The University may have an ESA removed from University housing by University Pest Control if it is not removed in a timely manner or is not being provided care to ensure its immediate health and well-being.

12. Should the resident provide knowingly false information regarding the need for an ESA, or refuse to follow appropriate direction from University personnel concerning their conduct in relation to the ESA, the University may refer the student to the Dean of Students for any decision regarding sanctions.

13. The individual must provide written consent for OAA and University Housing and Dining Services to disclose the information regarding the request for and presence of the ESA to those individuals who may be impacted by the presence of the animal including, but not limited to, other relevant EIU personnel and potential and/or actual roommate(s)/neighbor(s). Such information shall be limited to information related to the animal and shall not include information related to the individual's disability.

Right to Inspect

University staff maintain the right to inspect the resident's living space to investigate complaints or concerns and/or to confirm the resident's compliance with this Policy.

Removal of an ESA

If the animal is unable to successfully adapt to the communal living setting, or the resident violates the terms of this contract, it may be necessary to remove the animal from University housing. If the determination is made by University Housing and Dining Services staff or the Dean of Students Office, the animal must be removed from University housing within 48 hours of notification.

The University may require the resident to remove the ESA from University housing if:

1. The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others or causes substantial property damage to the property of others or university property;
2. the animal's presence results in a fundamental alteration of a University program;
3. the resident does not comply with the resident's Responsibilities set forth above;
4. the animal or its presence creates an unmanageable disturbance or interference with the University community; or
5. the animal is not housebroken.

The University will base such determinations upon the consideration of the behavior of the particular animal at issue, and not on speculation or fear about the harm or damage an animal may cause. Any removal of the animal will be done in consultation with the Office of Accessibility and Accommodation in order to determine what other accommodations or resources may help alleviate symptoms of the resident's mental health disability while on campus.

This decision may be appealed following the Dean' of Student's [Appeal a Disciplinary Decision and/or Sanction](#) process. The resident will be afforded all rights of due process and appeal as outlined in that process. If the ESA is excluded from University housing, the animal must remain off campus during the appeal process.

Should the ESA be removed from the premises for any reason, the resident is expected to fulfill the existing financial obligations for the remainder of the housing contract.

Non-retaliation Provision

EIU will not retaliate against any person because that individual has requested or received a reasonable accommodation in University housing, including a request for an ESA.

Acknowledgement and Release of Information Consent

By my signature below, I verify that I have read, understand and will abide by the requirements outlined here and I agree to provide the additional information required to complete my Request for a Reasonable Accommodation under the University's Emotional Support Animal Policy for University housing.

I have read and understand the EIU Emotional Support Animal Policy and Agreement and I agree to abide by the requirements applicable to ESAs. I understand that if I fail to meet the requirements set forth in the Policy, EIU has the right to remove the ESA and I will be nonetheless required to fulfill my housing, academic, and all other obligations for the remainder of the housing contract. I understand that if I violate this agreement, I may be subject to disciplinary action through the Student Code of Conduct.

I furthermore give permission to the Office of Accessibility & Accommodations and University Housing and Dining Services to disclose to others impacted by the presence of my Emotional Support Animal (e.g., relevant EIU staff, potential and/or actual roommate(s)/neighbor(s)) that I will be living with an animal as an accommodation. I understand that this information will be shared with the intent of preparing for the presence of the ESA and/or resolving any potential issues associated with the presence of the ESA.

I further recognize that the presence of the ESA may be noticed by others visiting or residing in University housing and agree that staff may acknowledge the presence of the animal, and explain that under certain circumstances ESAs are permitted as a housing accommodation.

Resident's Signature/Date

This policy is current as of May 26, 2026. The University reserves the right to make changes to this policy as necessary at any time.