

Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Accommodation Request Process

Cedar Crest College recognizes that Emotional Support Animals, ESAs, are often used as part of a treatment plan for individuals with disabilities. Emotional Support Animals are a category of animals that provide necessary emotional/therapeutic support to an individual with a mental/psychiatric disability and/or a physical disability. This animal serves to alleviate one or more identified functional limitations of an individual's disability. A direct connection (or nexus) between the student's functional limitations/barriers to equally accessing housing (due to a disability) and the need for the ESA is necessary.

ESAs are neither service animals (as defined by the ADA) nor are they pets. A pet is defined as is an animal kept for ordinary use and companionship. Pets are not permitted in campus housing (with the exception of fish). ESAs are not permitted on campus unless approved as an accommodation by the Director of Student Accessibility Services.

ESAs must be necessary for the student with a disability to have equal access to housing and the accommodation must also be reasonable. An accommodation is unreasonable if:

- It presents an undue financial or administrative burden on the College;
- The requested animal is poisonous, venomous, or can be reasonably viewed as high risk;
- Poses a substantial and direct threat to any person;
- The size of the animal is too large for available assigned housing space (or available alternate housing spaces, if any);
- The animal's presence would force another individual from housing (e.g. serious allergies);
- The animal's presence otherwise violates individuals' rights to peace and quiet enjoyment; or
- It constitutes a fundamental alteration of the nature of the College's program or service.

Process

The interactive and deliberative process required to approve accommodations can take time. Students are encouraged to make the request for an Emotional Support Animal as soon as they are aware of the need for this accommodation, preferably at least four (4) weeks prior to the student's preferred date to bring the animal to campus. The student will initially need to meet with the Director of Student Accessibility Services to self-disclose information about the disability and the need for this accommodation. In addition, the student will need to provide supplemental documentation that supports the need for the animal.

Once the student has completed the Self-Disclosure meeting and provided documentation describing an identifiable relationship, or nexus, between the student's functional limitations due to a disability and the therapeutic need for the animal in ameliorating those limitations, the following are next steps:

1. The student is initially **only approved for the accommodation of the ESA.**
2. The Director of Student Accessibility Services will then **determine if the student's preferred animal is appropriate for residence hall living** and/or if the student's current on-campus residence is appropriate for the preferred animal.
3. The student will meet with The Director of Student Accessibility Services to review the "Owner Responsibilities" document.

4. If the student's preferred animal is approved, the student will then provide Student Accessibility Services with updated veterinary documentation (including Certificate of Health) depending upon the type of animal (go to step 6).
5. If the student's preferred animal is not approved, the student will have the opportunity to choose a different animal or appeal the decision (go to step 2).
6. The Director of Student Accessibility Services will verify the student's roommate(s) (if applicable) is/are willing and able to live with the animal in question.
7. Should there be any issue with the roommate(s) living with the animal, the Director of Student Accessibility will work with Residence Life staff to make any necessary housing changes.
8. The Director of Student Accessibility services and the student will then set a date for the animal to be brought to campus.
9. The student will be provided with a Residence Hall Accommodation Memo outlining the student's approval for an ESA.
10. The offices of Residence Life, Campus Police, and Facilities/Maintenance will be notified of the approval of the emotional support animal.

U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development – ESAs Are “Commonly Kept” Animals

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has indicated that ESAs are generally animals commonly kept in households. If the animal is a dog, cat, small bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, other rodent, fish, turtle, or other small, domesticated animal that is traditionally kept in the home for pleasure rather than for commercial purposes, then it can be considered as an ESA. They further indicated that reptiles (other than turtles), barnyard animals, monkeys, kangaroos, and other non-domesticated animals are not considered common household animals. No animal will be approved as an ESA that does not qualify as an allowable animal under federal, state or local law.

Specific Requirements for Dogs and Cats

If a dog or cat is requested as the preferred animal, it must meet these requirements in order to be approved as an ESA:

Dogs:

- Proof of breed, expected size, age, up-to-date vaccinations including rabies & distemper
- Proof of sterilization (spaying or neutering)
- Must be house-broken
- Valid rabies and license tags on collar at all times – licenses may be obtained from either Lehigh County or the county of the student's permanent residence

Cats:

- Proof of up-to-date rabies and distemper vaccinations
- Proof of sterilization (spaying or neutering)
- Must be litter box trained
- Valid rabies and license tags on collar at all times – licenses may be obtained from either Lehigh County or the county of the student's permanent residence

Limitations on Animals Allowed as Emotional Support Animals

City of Allentown Animal Ordinances

The following are excerpts from the City of Allentown's Animal Ordinances and must be followed at Cedar Crest College:

No person shall keep a wild or exotic animal in any place other than a zoological park, veterinary hospital or clinic, humane society, or circus, sideshow, amusement show or facility used for educational or scientific purposes, which provides proper cages, fences and other protective devices adequate to prevent such animal from escaping or injuring the public. Wild or Exotic Animal shall mean any animal of a species prohibited by Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, or otherwise controlled by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It shall include any animal which is wild, fierce, dangerous, noxious, or naturally inclined to do harm.

Keeping farm animals is prohibited. It shall be unlawful for any person to keep or maintain any cattle, swine, sheep, goats or fowl in the City except at such places as are provided for slaughtering or laboratory purposes. This provision is not intended to apply to the Lehigh County Agricultural Society and its activities at the Allentown Fair.

Note: Allentown Animal Control indicated, in a phone call, "fowl" would refer to chickens, roosters, ducks, geese, pheasant, quail, emu, ostrich etc. - fowl that are typically found on a farm or ranch.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania prohibits ownership of hedgehogs; therefore, they may not serve as ESAs in the residence halls.

Special Considerations

Due to the unique, communal living environment in our residence halls, some types of animals may not be permitted even if such animals are permitted to be owned (domestically) by law. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis. These decisions may be based on considerations such as: the safety of other residents, the natural habitat and active orientation (nocturnal etc.) of the requested animal, the potential for the animal to spread illness/disease, the potential for an infestation to occur if the animal escapes confinement, the ability of the student to physically care for the animal and the animal's welfare with regard to residence hall living.

Please Note:

- Emotional Support Animals do not need to be certified, in any way, by an outside agency in order to serve in this capacity at Cedar Crest College.
- Students may not bring potential ESAs on campus until this process is completed and a date has been set for the animal to reside on campus.
- Students who bring animals on campus prior to the process being completed may be fined by Residence Life and/or may face a conduct violation.

I have read, or have had read to me, this information on the process by which an Emotional Support Animal may be approved as an accommodation.

Student Name (print): _____ Student ID#: _____ Date: _____

Animal Description: _____ Signature: _____