

## EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

### Section: Assignments

**Policy:** University Housing accommodates emotional support animals (ESAs) in accordance with University Policy.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to identify procedures associated with requests for emotional support animals in University Housing. This policy is meant to be housing-specific and works in support of the campus [Service Animals and UGA Animal Policy](#).

**Scope:** Applies to all residents (e.g., students, staff and summer conference guests of University Housing) with approved emotional support animals who reside in University Housing.

**Definition:** According to the campus [Service Animals and UGA Animal Policy](#), an emotional support animal is defined as any animal providing emotional support, well-being or comfort that eases one or more identified symptoms or effects of a documented disability. Emotional support animals may also be referred to as comfort or therapy animals. Emotional support animals are not individually trained to perform specific work or tasks. In general, only domesticated animals of a type commonly kept in households are eligible to serve as emotional support animals. Pets are not considered emotional support animals.

### Procedure:

- I. Residents who wish to have an ESA in their assigned residence hall or apartment must first get approval and complete all housing-related paperwork prior to bringing the animal on campus. This approval is limited to one ESA and is granted for only one academic year (and subsequent summer, if applicable) at a time.
- II. Initiating the request process
  - a. For residents who are students
    - i. Residents must register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to obtain approval for the animal.
    - ii. The DRC will notify the associate director for assignments and contracts when a student has registered with the DRC and approval for the ESA has been granted.
    - iii. Even with approval from the DRC, all housing-related paperwork must be completed, submitted and processed prior to the animal residing on campus.
  - b. For residents who are staff or live-in academic partners (and any live-in family members)
    - i. Residents must contact the housing human resources senior manager to route the request for approval for the animal to Faculty and Staff Relations.
    - ii. Faculty and Staff Relations shall notify the housing human resources senior manager when staff have been approved to have an ESA reside in their on-campus apartment.
    - iii. The human resources senior manager will provide the associate director for assignments and contracts with the staff names, so they can issue the housing-related paperwork to be completed.
    - iv. Even with approval from Faculty and Staff Relations, all housing-related paperwork must be completed, submitted and processed prior to the animal residing on campus.
  - c. For residents who are residing on campus as part of a summer conference program

- i. Residents who are residing on campus as part of a summer conference program should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at [drc@uga.edu](mailto:drc@uga.edu) to initiate a request.
  - ii. To allow for adequate time for the DRC to review the request before University begins assigning rooms for summer camps and conferences, group participants should submit their request to the DRC no later than May 1.
  - iii. The DRC will notify the associate director for assignments and contracts when a student has registered with the DRC and approval for the ESA has been granted.
  - iv. The associate director for assignments and contracts will alert the assistant director responsible for conference services and facilities staff to an animal approved to reside in on-campus housing.
- III. Upon receiving notification of an approved ESA, the associate director for assignments and contracts or their designee will send the resident a copy of the housing policy and the agreement form for review and signature.
- IV. The resident will complete and submit the agreement form to the associate director of assignments and contracts and provide an electronic photo of the animal. The associate director will update the resident's entry in StarRez to include the animal information and picture and notify appropriate housing staff. Residents who are participating in a summer conference program will not be listed in StarRez.
- V. The resident is required to provide the contact information of two individuals who do not live on campus who can take possession of the animal in the event of an emergency.
- VI. If the assignment is in a double room, apartment or suite where a roommate will also reside or is currently residing, the Housing Assignments Office will notify the roommate that an animal, including the type of animal, will reside in the room. No information as to the purpose of the ESA will be disclosed to the roommate.
- VII. The resident must notify the Housing Assignments Office in writing ([housing@uga.edu](mailto:housing@uga.edu)) when the ESA is no longer in residence and re-register with the DRC (students) or Faculty Staff Relations (staff) if a different ESA is needed mid-year.
- VIII. If mistreatment of the animal is reported or if the resident is not adhering to any section of this policy or the University policy, the appropriate housing staff member will review the report with the resident and the resident may be referred to the Equal Opportunity Office and/or through a University student conduct process and/or a housing contract review. In addition, the resident may be required to remove the animal if the resident fails to comply with University and University Housing policies regarding the care and maintenance of ESAs or the animal's behavior disrupts the residential community. When removal is necessary, the resident will be notified in writing and will be provided a reasonable amount of time to make alternative arrangements for the animal. In these cases where the resident is a student, the responsible residents are still expected to fulfil their housing obligation for the remainder of their housing contract.
- IX. Resident Responsibilities:
  - a. All ESAs must be treated humanely, including being housed in acceptable conditions (e.g., appropriately sized crate or carrier, ability to move freely in the assigned space while resident is present).
  - b. The resident must complete and email the agreement form and a picture of the animal to the associate director for assignments and contracts at [housing@uga.edu](mailto:housing@uga.edu) prior to the animal residing on campus. This agreement also includes resident consent for University Housing to disclose information related to

the ESA to relevant parties affected by the presence of the animal, including roommates/suitemates and housing staff. Any information disclosed will be limited to information regarding the animal and not specific to a resident's disability.

- c. The resident is required to identify a minimum of two alternate caregivers in case of emergency. These alternative caregivers should be prepared to take custody of the ESA within 12 hours' notice and cannot be another on-campus resident. In circumstances where an alternative caregiver must take custody, the institution does not accept liability or responsibility for the animal prior to the alternative caretaker taking custody.
- d. The resident is restricted to keeping the approved ESA within their assigned room/apartment unless the resident is leaving the building with the animal for care or other purposes.
- e. The resident is responsible for ensuring the ESA does not interfere with the daily operations of the residential facility or cause difficulties for other residents who reside and work there.
- f. The resident agrees that sensitivity to individuals with allergies and to those who fear animals is important to ensure the integrity of the academic and residential community.
- g. The resident agrees to maintain their living space in a manner that minimizes odors and/or the accumulation of animal fur/dander, if applicable, and the ESA's food should be kept in a closed container to minimize the attraction of pests.
- h. The resident is responsible for properly containing and disposing of all animal waste. Outdoor animal waste must be immediately retrieved by the resident, placed in a plastic bag and securely tied before being disposed of in outside trash dumpsters.
- i. The resident agrees to continue to abide by all University Housing policies and procedures in accordance with the University Housing contract and Community Guide, including those regarding room condition and damages.
- j. The ESA must be under the direct control of the resident (e.g., on a leash/harness, in a crate or cage) upon leaving a resident's room or apartment.
- k. Should the resident leave the animal temporarily unattended in their residence due to class, work or some other activity, the resident will crate or confine (e.g., in a carrier) the ESA such that staff may access the room for maintenance or other business-related purposes without posing a risk to the ESA or the animal posing a risk to the staff member.
- l. The resident is prohibited from transferring control of the ESA to another person even momentarily, requesting the assistance of other persons in supervising or controlling their ESA, or otherwise leaving the presence of their animal for any period of time except (e.g., overnight) as provided by this policy or other University policies.
- m. The resident must ensure their animal is clean and well-groomed and kept in a healthy environment.
- n. The resident is responsible for knowing and understanding any relevant state and local ordinances, laws and regulations regarding health, vaccination and care of the particular type of animal.
- o. Per university policy, the resident shall be liable for any and all resulting costs when an animal causes damage to University Housing facilities or property, causes injury to persons, or when cleaning or pest management costs are in excess of typical operations.

X. Animal Health and Behavior:

- a. ESAs will be permitted provided their behavior, noise, odor and waste does not exceed reasonable standards for a well-behaved animal and that these factors do not create unreasonable disruptions to the residential community.

- b. ESAs must be housebroken, spayed or neutered, in good health and generally well-behaved.
- c. Fire drills are scheduled to test building systems, but a fire alarm may occur at any time with no warning. All residents present at the time of a fire drill or alarm are required to leave the building. The resident should be mindful that alarms will ring for an extended period, often in excess of five minutes. As no advanced warning is provided in the event of a fire alarm, residents should be aware of how the continuous alarm might affect their ESA if left alone in their living space during this time. In the event of a fire alarm, housing staff will not be responsible for removing the ESA from the building.
- d. ESAs must be in compliance with state and local ordinances, laws and regulations regarding health, vaccination and care of the particular type of animal.

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