



## Services for Students with Disabilities Guidelines for Students Requesting Emotional Support Animals (ESA)

Students requesting to bring an emotional support animal (ESA) to live in campus housing must submit documentation that verifies their eligibility as a person with a disability and clearly explains why the requested accommodation is necessary to provide equal access to their living environment. The documentation must describe a disabling condition, which is defined by the presence of *significant* limitations in one or more major life activities. Merely submitting evidence of a diagnosis is not sufficient to support the need for accommodations. A verification form is also available to provide guidance in the assessment process. Please do not hesitate to contact SSD at (512) 471-6259 if you have any questions.

A licensed healthcare provider with experience and expertise in the area related to the student's disability should provide the documentation. Furthermore, a therapeutic relationship between provider and the student requesting the ESA should be evident. The provider submitting documentation cannot be related to the student.

1. **Diagnosis:** A clear statement of the physical disability or medical condition and understanding of student's relationship with provider.
  - a. Approximate onset of diagnosis
  - b. Date of initial clinical contact with the student
  - c. Date of last office visit with the student: *This provides information on a student's current functioning.* Because conditions may change over time, current evaluations are critical in providing reasonable accommodations. In addition, depending on the nature of the disability, evaluations may need to be updated on a semester-by-semester or yearly basis.
  - d. Date of next office visit with the student (if applicable)
  - e. Approximate number of sessions with student
2. **Evaluation**
  - a. Assessment procedures and evaluation instruments that have been used to make the diagnosis
  - b. Describe the symptoms related to the diagnosis that cause significant impairment in a major life activity
  - c. Current treatment

- d. Severity of symptoms
- e. Prognosis of disorder

3. ***Emotional Support Animal Assessment***

- a. Type of animal being recommended
- b. Indicate whether student has an existing relationship with an emotional support animal or a new animal is being prescribed
- c. Explanation for why an emotional support animal is necessary as part of the student's treatment plan and/or how its presence will provide the student equal access to their on campus living environment
- d. Indicate the assessment procedures used to determine disability-related benefits
- e. List any additional provider credentials or training related to prescribing an emotional support animal (optional)

Further assessment by an appropriate professional may be required if co-existing disabilities are indicated. All documentation must be submitted on the official letterhead of the professional describing the disability or by using the Verification Form for Students Requesting Emotional Support Animals. The report should be dated and signed and include the name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, including information about license or certification. Services for Students with Disabilities will make the determination regarding whether accommodations are reasonable in the University environment based on the information provided by the student and the healthcare provider.

**All documentation is considered confidential and can be mailed, faxed or emailed to:**

The University of Texas at Austin  
Division of Diversity and Community Engagement  
Services for Students with Disabilities  
100 W. Dean Keeton St. Stop A4100  
Austin, Texas 78712-1093

Fax: (512) 475-7730

Email: [ssd@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:ssd@austin.utexas.edu)