



CSU Health Network Guidelines Emotional Support Animals & Service Dogs Information for Students

Emotional Support Animal

An Emotional Support Animal is an animal that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of an individual's disability. Documentation that a person has a *disability* requires more than a diagnosis of a medical or mental disorder. Disability documentation involves a professional's determination that a person's illness, injury, and/or condition *substantially limits one or more major life activities* for the individual. Once that determination is made, it must also be determined whether the Emotional Support Animal is necessary to provide the person with equal opportunity to use and enjoy his or her residence, and if there is an identifiable nexus between the disability and the assistance the animal provides in alleviating the effects of the disability.

An Emotional Support Animal is not a pet. An Emotional Support Animal lives at home and does not accompany the person from place to place. Caring for this animal often enables the person to feel motivated, less depressed or anxious, and more able to connect with others. While dogs and cats are the most common type of Emotional Support Animals, other animals can provide emotional support if they can be appropriately cared for within the context of the dwelling. (Please note that an emotional support animal is rarely a puppy or kitten. Puppies and kittens require constant care and training. Owning and training a very young animal can be stressful and is contraindicated in the treatment of many mental health conditions.)

Service Dogs

Trained dogs are the primary species of animal that may qualify as a service animal under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ADA regulations define "service animal" narrowly as any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with an ADA recognized disability. Unlike Emotional Support Animals, a Service Dog accompanies the individual from place to place.

In order to be considered for an ESA/Psychiatric Service Dog through CSUHN, you MUST:

- Be seen in counseling for one full semester (or equivalent) before a referral is considered.
- Be determined to have a psychiatric disability. A disability is different from simply having a psychiatric diagnosis. In order for a diagnosis to rise to the level of a disability, it must present *significant impairment in day to day functioning*. The way the law interprets significant impairment may be different from the way that you interpret it.
- Show that there is a direct connection between your disability and the use of an ESA/Psychiatric Service Dog.
- Show that you can properly care for an ESA or a Psychiatric Service Dog.

Important Information regarding Requests to CSU Health Network Re: Emotional Support Animal or Service Dog:

- *You should discuss your need for an assistance animal BEFORE purchasing or relocating an animal!*
- Your provider must determine that you are impaired with an ADA qualifying mental disability. Your provider will outline the steps involved in making this determination. .
- Appropriate staff of CSU's Student Disability Center (SDC) must approve all requests for Emotional Support Animals residing on campus. SDC also reviews requests for Service Dogs on campus and advises students as to the rules governing their use.
- Documentation of your need for an Emotional Support Animal, when approved by CSU Health Network, will be sent either to SDC (for on-campus housing) or directly to the student's off campus landlord (or the local Housing Authority, if relevant). You must first give written consent for such disclosure.
- These same rules apply to any student requesting to take an Emotional Support Animal or Service Dog on board an airplane.
- As of the 2016-2017 Academic year, CSU has a University wide policy governing the use of Emotional Support Animals and Service Dogs on Campus. This policy (University Policy ID # 8-8032-004) clearly specifies that the use of such animals is limited only to disabled students.
- As of June 10, 2016 the State of Colorado has determined it to be illegal for anyone to represent him or herself as disabled. It is also illegal in the State of Colorado to obtain approval for an ESA or Service Dog online.

Students interested in acquiring an ESA or Service Dog should review the ADA guidelines and how they pertain to living on or off the CSU Campus. Kathleen Ivy at the Student Disability Center (491-6385) can provide more information.