

CENTENARY COLLEGE OF LOUISIANA

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL (ESA) POLICY AND AGREEMENT

Centenary College recognizes the importance of “Service Animals” as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), and of Emotional Support Animals (ESAs), supported by the Fair Housing Act. The college is committed to allowing individuals with disabilities the use of a Service Animal on campus to facilitate their full participation and equal access to the University’s programs and activities. Centenary College is also committed to allowing ESAs, necessary to provide individuals with mental health disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy college housing. This policy explains the specific requirements applicable to an individual’s use of an ESA in college housing. Centenary reserves the right to amend this policy as circumstances require. This policy applies solely to ESAs that may be necessary in campus housing. It does not apply to “service animals” as defined by the ADAAA, and whose presence on campus is explained in the policy.

Although it is the policy of Centenary College that individuals are generally prohibited from having animals, other than small fish, in campus housing, Centenary will consider a request by an individual with a disability for reasonable accommodation from this prohibition to allow an ESA that is reasonable and necessary because of a mental health disability. However, no ESA may be kept in college housing at any time prior to the individual receiving approval as a reasonable accommodation pursuant to this policy. Any requests for animals in residence for individuals with disabilities that are neither service animals nor ESAs should be directed to the Disability Services Office.

Definition: Emotional Support Animal (ESA)

An Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is an animal that provides therapeutic emotional support for an individual with a diagnosed 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 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, but they typically are animals commonly kept in households as pets. An ESA may be a dog (most common), cat, small bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, fish, (some) turtles, or other small, domesticated animal that is traditionally kept in the home for pleasure. Typically, a dog must be at least 9 months of age to live on campus to assure that the dog is reliably house-trained, not disruptive to other residents, and has all the shots necessary to make it safe to be around humans and other animals (that may be in residence). Turtles can carry salmonella, so owners should always wash their hands after handling their ESA, as failure to do so runs the risk of spreading salmonella to objects around the room and campus. Exceptions to these guidelines regarding animals serving as ESAs will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

ESA as an accommodation:

The question in determining if an ESA will be allowed in college housing is whether the ESA is necessary, because of the individual's disability, to afford the individual an equal opportunity to use and enjoy college housing, and its presence in college housing is reasonable. However, even if the individual with a disability establishes necessity for an ESA and it is allowed in college housing, an ESA is not permitted in other areas of the campus (e.g., dining facilities, libraries, academic buildings, athletic buildings and facilities, classrooms, labs, individual centers, etc.), unlike a service animal.

An ESA may be a reasonable accommodation for a student with disabilities but only within the student's campus housing. Students may qualify for this accommodation if (1) the student has a documented disability. Federal law defines a person with a disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that ***substantially limits*** one or more major life activities (2) the animal is necessary to afford the student with a disability an equal opportunity to fully participate in the campus housing; and (3) there is a direct, identifiable, and documented nexus between the mental health impairment and the assistance provided by the ESA that mitigates one or more life activities. The College will allow only those ESAs that are allowed by local and state laws and conform to standards within this policy.

New students should obtain approval as soon as possible in advance of moving into housing, but at least 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) in advance of moving in. However, if the request and the required documentation are received less than thirty (30) days before the individual intends to move into campus housing, the request may be considered, but final approval may be delayed for a variety of reasons until the beginning of the next semester or term. Students are required to update their documentation on an annual basis including prior to room selection in the spring semester.

Returning students are to renew their ESA request through Disability Services and finalize housing accommodations requests for fall term at least 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) prior to requesting a room for the fall, which in the spring semester. If the request for accommodation(s) is made fewer than 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) prior to requesting a room, the college cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet the individual's accommodation needs during the following academic year. If the request is made after the deadline for fall room requests, it should be as soon as possible and at least 30 days (about 4 and a half weeks) prior to move in/the beginning of the next semester.

If the need for the accommodation arises or is requested when a student already resides in campus housing, the student should make the request and submit the required documentation as soon as possible but at least within 6 months of the new diagnosis. Even if approved Centenary cannot guarantee that it will be able to process the request and make the arrangements to meet the student's accommodation needs during that term in which the request is received. A student is not permitted to live with an emotional assistance animal until expressly approved to do so by the Office of Disabilities Services and/or Residence Life.

Disability Services (hereto referred to as “DS”) office will review documentation, make determinations, and confer with the appropriate members of the college community. Like all disability accommodations, the determination of whether an ESA will be permitted in on-campus housing is made on a case-by-case basis through an interactive process between the student and the DS office and Residence Life staff. Once approved, the DS office will notify the Residence Life Office. A Residence Life staff member will then contact the student for additional details (if needed) and, along with the student’s other residential life preferences or needs, determine a housing option for the student.

Only one animal will be approved to be in residence in a single housing unit. Consideration will be given to the size of the crate/cage that is needed for the animal to be contained while the student is not in the room. Roommates and suitemates must sign off approval to have the ESA present in the room and suite. Students should note that housing options may be limited as the College balances appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities with students who have allergies and/or animal fears. Consequently, advance notice (as soon as possible) of the need for an animal is essential to the College providing a smooth transition for the student. *The college cannot guarantee that you will remain in or obtain your desired dorm and room.*

Requirements for an ESA:

The care and supervision of the ESA is solely the responsibility of the student owner. The student must be always in full control of the ESA. ESAs may not pose a direct threat to the health and safety of persons on the college campus, cause physical damage to property, or fundamentally alter the nature of the College operations. Any animal that poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the safety or health of the individual/others will not be approved. This includes an animal with aggressive behavior towards or injuring an individual. Animals that pose health risks from zoonotic diseases or safety concerns regarding containment that cannot be sufficiently mitigated for inclusion in the communal living setting typically will not be approved.

The ESA must be maintained (kept clean, free from fleas or ticks, etc.) and may not create safety hazards for other people. Local and state ordinances and laws regarding animals apply, including requirements for immunizations, licensing, noise, restraint, large animals, and dangerous animals.

Centenary College, Centenary College personnel, and other Centenary College students are not required to provide food, care, or any additional space for any ESA. This includes, but is not limited to, removing the animal during an emergency evacuation for events such as a fire or other emergencies. Emergency personnel nor college personnel are responsible for the care of, damage to, or loss of the ESA.

An animal’s behavior, noise, odor, and waste must not exceed reasonable standards for a well-behaved animal. These factors should not create unreasonable disruptions for other residents. If the noise (whining, barking, or meowing) is excessive as judged by Residence Life Staff, it has grounds to issue a

warning or have the ESA removed from campus (at the owner's expense). If an owner receives more than one warning (for any policy violation), the student may be ordered to remove the animal from campus and/or a referral to the Student Conduct may be made. If the animal is deemed an immediate threat to the health and safety of others, the decision to exclude an ESA from the residential facility can be made by the Director of Residence Life or designee.

The college has the authority to exclude an ESA temporarily or permanently from its grounds or facilities if the animal's behavior is unruly, disruptive, in ill health, or habitually unclean. Centenary has adopted a "one bite policy" which requires an ESA be removed from the property (at the owner's expense) after a single occurrence of biting or other aggressive behavior. If an animal is removed, the student must fulfill all obligations of the housing contract.

The student is responsible for immediately cleaning up and properly disposing of the ESA's waste (both inside and outside) and is responsible for having the equipment to do so. People who are physically unable to accomplish this task are responsible for arranging for it to be done and any costs that it incurs. The college retains the right to designate a particular area for the ESA to relieve itself and/or for the disposal of its waste. The use of "Pee Pads" is not allowed for any animal. The use of a litter box for cats is acceptable. Animal waste should be placed in dumpsters only and not in any garbage cans/bins. Bathing of ESA is not allowed on campus. The cleaning of cages/crates must not take place in any campus building. Use of the laundry facilities for cleaning ESA bedding, clothing or other related items is prohibited.

ESAs are limited to the residential space (room) of the student except when exiting or entering the student's residential building. The student must use the most direct route between the closest entry/exit and the student's room when entering and exiting the building with ESA. The student will keep the ESA properly restrained (e.g., on a leash that is not extended more than five feet in length or in a pet carrier) when entering and exiting their room. The animal may not be taken into bathrooms, laundry facilities, indoor recreational rooms, lounges, hallways (other than to enter/exit the building), computer labs, study rooms, other students' rooms, or other areas of the residence hall. It also cannot be taken into classrooms or other buildings on campus or allowed to roam freely on campus grounds. All ESA's must be on a leash when outside.

The Process for Requesting an ESA:

The following must be *completed* according to the deadlines outlined above.

1. Register with the office of Disability Services as a person with a documented disability who is requesting a housing accommodation (it is recommended that you meet with DS staff for this purpose). The Registration Form is attached.
2. Obtain and submit documentation supporting the housing request and to confirm that your condition substantially limits one or more major life activities. (See ESA Request for Information Mental Health Provider Certification Form).

SOURCE:

A. Letters purchased from the internet for a set price rarely provide the information necessary to support an ESA request.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has been asked to investigate websites that purport to provide documentation from a health care provider in support of requests for an ESA. The websites in question offer for sale documentation that is not reliable for purposes of determining whether an individual has a disability or disability-related need for an ESA because the website operators and health care professionals who consult with them lack the personal knowledge that is necessary to make such determinations.

B. The request must be completed by a licensed professional who has relevant training and experience diagnosing and treating the reported condition.

C. The provider has been seeing the student long enough to consider the ESA as a thoughtful intervention intended to alleviate one or more of the symptoms of the person with a disability.

D. The professional may not be related to the individual being evaluated.

NOTE: Registering with Disability Services office can be completed or turned in at the same time as when ESA documentation is submitted.

3. Arrange an appointment with the Disability Services to review documents and discuss the request.

Prior to bringing the ESA to campus the student must: receive approval from Disability Services; sign an Emotional Support Animal Information and Agreement Form (see below); and provide to the Director of Residence Life the ESA roommate/suitemate agreement form (available from the Director of Residence Life), a suitable photo of the animal, and a suitable photo of the student with the animal. This process will be completed annually.

We reserve the right to amend this policy at any time.

CENTENARY COLLEGE OF LOUISIANA

Disability Services ESA Registration Form

Students who are seeking ESA accommodations for a disability are required to submit register with our office annually:

Date _____

Student Name _____

Date of Birth: _____ Student ID # _____

Home (permanent) Address: _____

City State Zip

Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____@my.centenary.edu

Type of proposed ESA Animal (if known): _____

Age of proposed animal: _____

Complete this form and return it to Disability Services. It is recommended that you make an appointment (call 318-869-5466) to speak to DS staff either in person or by phone prior to selecting an ESA or obtaining documentation from your mental health provider.

CENTENARY COLLEGE OF LOUISIANA

ESA INFORMATION AND AGREEMENT FORM

Name of Student (printed): _____ Date: _____

Student's Location and Room Number: _____

Type of Animal: _____ Name: _____

Breed: _____ Age: _____ Wt. _____

Coloring/Markings: _____ Gender: _____

Spayed/Neutered? _____ (yes/no) License/Tag # _____

Date of check-up: _____ *Date of vaccinations _____

*Next shots/vaccinations are needed on or before what date? _____

* Please attach copies of appropriate vaccination documentation and current veterinary Health Certificate (a statement by the veterinarian, that the animal is healthy) to this form. Include a recent picture of **you with the animal** (this can be emailed).

Provide the name and contact information for a *local* person to get pick up and care for the animal if you were incapacitated/hospitalized in some way. This person cannot be another student, staff, or faculty member. Please make sure that the named person is aware of this responsibility.

Emergency Contact: Name _____ Phone: _____

I understand and agree to follow all the requirements and policies for having an ESA and I will be given a copy of the ESA Information and Agreement Form if I request it. My signature on this form provides consent for Disability Services or Residence Life to disclose information regarding the request for an ESA to those individuals who may be impacted by the presence of the animal including, but not limited to: Other Residence Life personnel, potential and/or actual roommate(s) and neighbors, other college staff (e.g., The Department of Public Safety, Maintenance and Custodial staff). Such communication shall be limited to information related to the animal and shall not include information regarding my disability.

Signature of Student: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Disability Services Staff

C: Residence Life, DPS, Facilities

CENTENARY COLLEGE OF LOUISIANA

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL

(The health care provider need not use this specific form, but all the information requested here is necessary for the institution to have to consider the request for an ESA; the form is provided as a convenience.)

Student's Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____@my.centenary.edu

Type of proposed ESA Animal (if known): _____

Age of proposed animal (if known): _____

The above-named student has indicated that you are the health care provider who has suggested that having an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) in the residence hall will have therapeutic benefit in alleviating one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of the student's mental health disability. Generally, we accept documentation from providers in the State of Louisiana or the student's home state who have personal knowledge of the student, consistent with their professional obligations. * Letters purchased from the internet for a set price rarely provide the information necessary to support an ESA request.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has been asked to investigate websites that purport to provide documentation from a health care provider in support of requests for an ESA. The websites in question offer for sale documentation that is not reliable for purposes of determining whether an individual has a disability or disability-related need for an ESA because the website operators and health care professionals who consult with them lack the personal knowledge that is necessary to make such determinations.

Please answer all the following questions so that we may better evaluate the request for this accommodation.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENT'S DISABILITY

Federal law defines a person with a disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that ***substantially limits*** one or more major life activities. That suggests that a diagnosis (label) does not necessarily equate with a disability (substantial limitation). What is the nature of the student's mental health impairment (that is, how is the student ***substantially limited***?)

Does the student require ongoing treatment? If so, please describe:

When did you first meet with the student regarding this mental health diagnosis? _____

When did you last interact with the student regarding this mental health diagnosis? _____

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSED ESA

(Please note that there are some restrictions on the kind of animal that can be approved for campus housing. It is possible the student may be approved for an ESA based upon the information you provide here, but they may not be allowed to bring the specific animal named.)

Is this an animal that you specifically prescribed as a part of treatment for the student? Or is it a pet that you believe will have a beneficial effect for the student while a resident on campus?

What specific symptoms will be reduced by having the ESA, and how will those symptoms be mitigated by the presence of an ESA?

Is there evidence that an ESA has helped this student in the past or currently? If so, please explain.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ESA TO THE STUDENT’S WELL-BEING

In your opinion, how important is it for the student’s well-being that the ESA be in residence on campus?

What consequences, in terms of disability symptomology, may result if the accommodation is not approved?

Have you discussed the responsibilities associated with properly caring for an animal while engaged in typical college activities and residing in campus housing? (If you have not had the conversation with the student, we will discuss this with the student later.) _____

Do you believe those responsibilities might exacerbate the student’s symptoms in any way? If so, please explain:

Any additional information you would like to provide?

Thank you for taking the time to provide this information. If we need additional information, we may contact you at a later date. The student has signed this form (below) indicating written permission to share additional information with us in support of this request.

We recognize that having an ESA in the residence hall can be a real benefit for someone with a significant mental health disorder, but the practical limitations of our housing arrangements make it necessary to carefully consider the impact of the request for an ESA on the student and the campus community.

Please provide contact information, sign, and date this questionnaire (below) and return it to:

Disability Services
Centenary College of Louisiana
2911 Centenary Blvd.
Shreveport, Louisiana 71104
Phone: 318-869-5424 Fax: 318-841-7235

Providers contact information:

Printed Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Fax and/or Email address: _____

Signature: _____

License (# and State): _____

Date: _____

STUDENT: Please sign this form (below) before providing it to your mental health provider to complete.

By signing below, I consent to allowing my mental health provider to share any information relevant to my request for an ESA as an accommodation, as shown on this form, with personnel from the Disability Services office at Centenary College, for the next 90 days (about 3 months).

Student Signature

Date

*Source:

A) Must be completed by a licensed professional who has relevant training and experience diagnosing and treating the reported condition.

B) The professional completing this form may not be related to the individual requesting the ESA.