

Policy and Expectations for Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) on Campus

Rev. 8.12.24

Please read this document carefully and then sign and return the last page to the SAA office. ESAs will not be permitted on campus until all current updates and vaccinations are submitted. All documents must be submitted for approved ESAs no later than August 1 for animals returning for the fall semester.

Any request for a specific exception to the protocol described below should be directed to the SAA office SAA@Albright.edu and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

This document explains the specific requirements applicable to an individual's use of an ESA in college housing. Albright College reserves the right to amend this document as circumstances require. This document applies solely to ESAs that may be necessary in college housing. It does not apply to "service animals" as defined by the ADAAA. Any requested exceptions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Although it is the policy of Albright College that individuals are generally prohibited from having animals of any type in college housing, Albright 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 document. ***With the exception of service animals, any animal on campus without prior approval from the SAA office is considered a pet and will be subject to code of conduct rules and fines.*** Any requests for animals in residence that are neither service animals nor ESAs should be directed to the SAA 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 generally not trained to perform disability-specific tasks. Their therapeutic support is a function of their presence and interaction with the person with a mental health disability. ESAs are not pets, but they typically are animals commonly kept in households as pets. An ESA may be a small bird, cat, dog, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, fish, or other small, domesticated animal that is traditionally kept in the home for pleasure. Under recent guidance from HUD, reptiles, barnyard animals, monkeys, and other non-domesticated animals are not considered common household animals. Exceptions to these guidelines regarding animals serving as ESAs will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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 the necessity for an ESA and it is allowed in college housing, animals approved as ESAs are not permitted in other areas of the college (e.g., dining facilities, libraries, academic buildings, athletic buildings and facilities, classrooms, labs, individual centers, etc).

Documentation for an ESA

Some websites sell certificates, registrations, and licensing documents for emotional support animals to anyone who answers certain questions or participates in a short interview and pays a fee. Under the Fair Housing Act, a housing provider may request reliable documentation when an individual requesting a reasonable accommodation has a disability and disability-related need for an accommodation that is not obvious or otherwise known. In the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s experience, such documentation from the Internet is not, by itself, sufficient to reliably establish that an individual has a non-observable disability or disability-related need for an emotional support animal. (Excerpt from 2020 HUD Guidance)

Psychiatric disabilities require the expertise of one of the following professionals who can diagnose these conditions:

- Psychologists
- Neuropsychologists
- Psychiatrists
- Neuropsychiatrists
- Licensed Professional Counselors /Licensed Social Workers
- Other relevantly trained medical doctors

It is not considered appropriate for professionals to evaluate members of their own families.

Form letters are generally not helpful for the campus environment. It is important that your provider clearly identifies your specific mental health diagnosis, how long and how often they have been treating you for this specific disability, a detailed description of the symptoms that you are currently experiencing and how they affect your access to fully experience campus life, how an ESA would help alleviate these symptoms, alternatives

for addressing the same symptoms as appropriate, what other techniques are being used to mitigate symptoms, and other information, as appropriate, to support your request. If sufficient information is not included in the documentation, SAA may request a release form to speak with the provider directly.

A recommendation from a provider does not guarantee that the request will be approved or that it is reasonable.

Documentation needs to demonstrate that the student is under the care of the mental health professional and that they have a therapeutic relationship. Generally, **to assess the appropriateness for prescribing an ESA, the prescribing mental health care provider should have been consistently treating the student for a minimum of one year for the identified disability.** Please refer to “Understanding the Process for Requesting Reasonable Housing Accommodations” for additional information. This document can be found on the SAA website, or a hard copy may be requested from the SAA office. All student documentation is subject to verification. Please refer to the SAA website for documentation standards or request a hard copy from the SAA office.

Determination of Reasonableness

SAA may deny the requested accommodation if it is unreasonable. SAA will consult with the office of Residential Life to determine if implementing the requested accommodation is reasonable.

An accommodation is unreasonable if:

- the animal imposes an undue financial and/or administrative burden.
- the animal fundamentally alters college housing policies.
- the request is otherwise unreasonable to the operation of the college.

The following criteria may be considered when determining if a specific ESA is reasonable:

- whether the size of the animal is too large for the available assigned housing space.
- whether the animal's presence would force another individual from individual housing (e.g. serious allergies).
- whether the animal's presence otherwise violates individuals' right to peace and quiet enjoyment.
- whether the animal poses health risks from zoonotic diseases or safety concerns regarding containment cannot be sufficiently mitigated for inclusion in the communal living setting.
- whether the animal is a dog or cat and is less than one year old.
- whether the animal is housebroken and able to live with others in a reasonable manner.
- whether the animal's vaccinations are up to date.
- whether the animal poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the individual or others such as aggressive behavior towards or injuring the individual or others.
- whether the animal has caused substantial damage to the property of others, including college property.
- whether the animal causes or has caused excessive damage to housing beyond reasonable wear and tear.

Approval of Accommodation

If SAA determines the requested accommodation is necessary and is reasonable, it will contact the student to arrange a meeting to discuss the implementation of the accommodation.

Before bringing your approved ESA to campus the following must be done:

- Complete the animal card in your student health portal, including an alternative responsible person.
- Upload a photo of your ESA to the portal.
- Upload a photo of the animal's crate or cage to the portal.
- Provide current vet records (notice that the animal is healthy and vaccinations as appropriate)
- Upload a photo of the current license for ESA dogs (A PA dog license is required).
- Complete the roommate agreement.
- Receive clearance from ResLife and SAA that everything is completed.

Denial of Accommodation/Appeal

If SAA determines a requested accommodation is necessary but unreasonable, the office will notify the student of the determination and will engage in an interactive process with the student to determine if there are alternative accommodations that might effectively meet their disability-related needs.

If no alternative reasonable accommodations are available, or if the student is unwilling to accept any alternative accommodation offered by SAA, the student will be provided with notification of the denial and the reasons for the denial. Students have the right to appeal the decision, and the details of the appeals process are explained on the SAA website.

Care and Control of Emotional Support Animals

Albright College and employees of the college are not responsible for the care or supervision of an emotional support animal. This includes but is not limited to, providing food for the animal and cleaning up the animal's waste. Individuals who cannot pick up and dispose of the animal's waste are responsible for making all necessary arrangements for assistance.

Uncontained heating elements (e.g., heat lamps) pose a fire threat to joint living spaces and are not permitted in student residences. Animals requiring heating elements may not be suitable for life in a college residence.

General Expectations for an ESA

Individuals with emotional support animals are encouraged to remember that their animal will impact others living and working at Albright.

- An ESA is a single animal.
- ESAs are not permitted in residence halls without prior approval from the SAA office followed by ResLife confirmation. Students may not have an ESA on campus during the approval process.

- ***With the exception of service dogs, any animal on campus without prior approval from the SAA office is considered a pet and will be subject to code of conduct rules and fines.***
- *An ESA must be contained within the owner's privately assigned individual living accommodations (e.g., room, suite, apartment) except to the extent the individual is taking the animal out for natural relief.*
- ESAs must be able to live on campus without creating a disturbance for other residents and members of the community, including when the student is not in their room. ESAs should not vocalize unnecessarily, i.e. barking, growling or whining, or make other noises that would disturb others.
- ESAs must be harnessed, leashed, or otherwise contained if they must leave the room to go outside for natural relief.
- ESAs must be kept in a secured **glass or metal** crate or cage as appropriate when not with the student. ESAs may not be uncrated if the roommate is present and the identified student is not.
- For fire safety reasons, crates must be stored under the student's bed without bed risers. **The maximum height of the crate may not exceed 30"**. If the student has a bed that only rises to 24", they may request a bed swap from Residential Life. Only small animals in aquariums may be kept on dressers.
- ESAs should be common household pets as defined in the HUD 2020 guidance.
- ESAs must not carry zoonotic diseases that can be spread in shared living spaces
- The animal must be clean, well-groomed, and not have an offensive odor
- The animal must not urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations.
- ESAs must not be bathed using residence hall facilities, and cages/crates may not be washed in residence hall facilities.
- Live food for animals may not be stored on campus.
- Cats or dogs:
 - **ESA vaccinations established by Pennsylvania will be submitted yearly by August 1 and will indicate that they are valid through the academic year (August-June).**
 - ESAs must be housebroken and spayed/ neutered.
 - ESA cats or dogs must be a minimum of one year old
 - To stay in compliance with PA law, if an accommodation for an ESA (specifically, a dog) is approved through the SAA office the student will need to provide evidence of the animal's license to SAA prior to the animal being permitted to reside on campus.
 - Licenses are issued by the [county treasurer](#), and new tags must be displayed by January 1 of each year. Licenses are available annually or for life and can be purchased in person at the treasurer's office, by mail, or online.
 - A PA dog license is required regardless of the animal's home state.
- Should there be any reason that your specific ESA can no longer be on campus, you must receive prior approval for a specific new ESA before bringing it to campus. All pertinent vet records, forms, photos, etc. must be submitted to the SAA office for the new animal for review.

Residential Expectations

- Students with emotional support animals should maintain a clean and orderly room. Pet hair and dander should be cleaned up regularly, as other residents may have allergies or may develop allergies.
- Urine and feces must be properly disposed of daily and only in outside garbage receptacles.
- Animal waste disposal via college plumbing is prohibited.

- Consistent with the Community Living Guide, “periodic inspections will be made randomly throughout the academic year. An official of the college may make at least one inspection a month.”
- The ESA animal must be discussed with roommates and necessary provisions regarding the animal are to be included in the roommate contract. For example, roommates should discuss restrictions on the animal’s movement in the room/apartment or how the animal will adhere to quiet hours. The student and roommates must meet with a professional staff member from the Office of Residential Life to complete an updated roommate contract. The staff member will guide students to craft an optimized roommate contract which will account for a variety of scenarios that might impact the communal living environment. The updated roommate contract should be completed at least one business day before the animal’s arrival.
- Students with ESAs will be held responsible for destruction and damage to the residence halls caused by the animal and should consult the Community Living Guide for further information on property loss and damage. In addition, Albright College is not responsible for damages to personal or individual property caused by such animals. Students are expected to accept responsibility for damage to personal or college property caused by their animal. This includes the property of their roommate(s) and other members of the college community.
- Students with an ESA will be responsible for any cleaning costs beyond what is considered normal “wear and tear”. This includes any additional cost to remove pet odors or urine.
- The student’s living accommodations may also be inspected for fleas, ticks or other pests. If fleas, ticks or other pests are detected through inspection, the residence will be treated using approved fumigation methods by a college-approved pest control service. The student will be billed for the expense of any pest treatment above and beyond standard pest management in the residence halls. The college shall have the right to bill the student’s account for unmet obligations under this provision
- Approval for an ESA **does not** include approval for a single room.

Other Expectations

- *By bringing an ESA to campus, the student agrees to the disclosure of information regarding the request for and presence of the ESA to those individuals who may be impacted by the presence of the animal including, but not limited to: Residential Life personnel, potential and/or actual roommate(s)/neighbor(s), Public Safety personnel and facilities. Such disclosure shall be limited to information related to the animal and shall not include information related to the individual’s disability.*
- Students are required to provide accurate contact information for a person willing to accept responsibility for the ESA should it no longer be able to reside on campus with the student. This person may not be another Albright student and must have a permanent address off-campus. This person will be contacted to confirm their consent to be responsible for the ESA.

Unattended Animals

- ESAs should not be left unattended in the residence halls for more than four (4) hours. If students will be leaving campus for the weekend or breaks, they are required to take their animal with them. Boarding the animal in an off-campus facility is also an option. The student will be responsible for transporting the animal to the off-campus facility.

- Since the animal is permitted on campus as an accommodation for a specific student, the student with the accommodation is responsible for the control, observation, and maintenance of the animal. Other students should not serve as proxies to attend/care for the animal.
- **ESAs must be crated if the owner is not present, even if a roommate is in the room.**
- Students should contact the Director of SAA as soon as possible in instances of temporary illness or hospitalization.

Removal of ESAs

Should the Emotional Support Animal be removed from the premises for any reason, the owner is expected to fulfill their housing obligations for the remainder of the housing contract. If the removal of an ESA becomes necessary, the student will have 48 hours to remove the ESA. If the animal has been aggressive or is a danger to others, this time may be shortened as deemed necessary. Any requests for an exception will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

A person with an impairment will be asked to remove their ESA from the college for the following reasons:

- The animal causes a fundamental alteration of campus facilities, programs, or activities.
- The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others
- The animal is disruptive or exhibits aggressive or fearful behavior.
- The animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it
- The animal is not housebroken, or the handler is not able to maintain a hygienic living environment.
- The handler is unable to care for the animal. Students should contact the Director of SAA as soon as possible in instances of temporary illness or hospitalization.
- The handler has not provided documentation that supports the need for the housing accommodation. Generally, updates from the treating provider are due by April 1 for the following academic year.
- Individuals who are asked to remove their emotional support animals should contact the Director of SAA promptly to inquire about reasonable accommodations without the animal's presence.

Violation of Policy

- Students who violate the current Animal Policy or items in this document are subject to violation of code of conduct rules. Fines, removal of the ESA and/ or other disciplinary action may be consequences of violation.

Policy and Expectations for Emotional Support Animals on Campus Acknowledgement and Consent

I have read, understand, and agree to the terms of this document. I will provide all required documentation to the Director of SAA prior to the ESA animal arriving at my campus residence and shall comply with all guidelines outlined above in addition to any guidelines in the current Animal Policy. I understand that my ESA may be removed if I do not follow the provisions of this agreement.

I agree to disclose information regarding the request for and presence of the ESA to those individuals who may be impacted by the presence of the animal including, but not limited to, Residential Life personnel, potential and/ or actual roommate(s)/neighbor(s), public safety personnel and facilities. Such disclosure shall be limited to information related to the animal and shall not include information related to the individual's disability.

Student Signature

Print Student Name

Date Signed

Questions and concerns regarding ESAs on campus can be directed to the SAA office
by email at SAA@albright.edu or by phone at 610-921-7503