



STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR REQUESTING AN EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL (ESA)

ESA Definition

According to NC Central's **Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals on Campus Regulation**, an "Emotional Support Animal" (ESA) is any animal that (1) alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability; (2) is necessary because of an individual's disability to afford the individual an equal opportunity to use and enjoy University housing; and (3) its presence in University housing is reasonable. An ESA is not a service animal under this regulation or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ESAs may also be referred to as "Comfort Animals." Please note a student's ESA will not be allowed in any other areas on campus except for the student's living area in the residence hall.

Psychological disabilities are considered to be conditions involving psychological, emotional, cognitive, and/or behavioral disorders and symptoms. Qualified professionals should provide documentation for the psychological or medical necessity of a patient or client having an ESA as a part of their ongoing medical treatment plan. Qualified professionals should also be able to diagnose and determine psychiatric disabilities according to the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Version 5 (DSM-5). Qualified professionals who can provide ESA documentation may include the following **licensed** providers:

Psychologists/Neuropsychologists; Psychiatrists/Neuropsychiatrists; Psychiatric nurse practitioners; Professional Counselors; Mental Health Counselors; Clinical Social Workers; other qualified medical professionals who possess the knowledge, skills and abilities to determine whether or not an ESA is a medical/psychological necessity for an individual with a diagnosed disability.

Documentation of the need for an ESA should include a **signed letter on professional letterhead from the qualified professional as described above**. The letter should include the following items:

1. Qualified professional's printed name, title, license/certification credentials, area of specialization, phone/fax number, address, signature, and date(s) of treatment;
2. Clear statement of the individual's diagnosis according to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Version 5 (DSM-5), with a description of diagnostic tests, assessment methods, and/or criteria used to diagnose the individual;
3. Description of expected progression or stability of the impact of the condition on the person, for up to one year from the date of the letter;
4. A clear description of the current impact, functional limitations, and current symptoms of the disability or psychological condition. An explanation should also be provided regarding the impact of the condition and its effect on the student in the university academic setting.
5. The following statement: *I am the licensed physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, therapist, counselor, or other qualified mental health professional, for (student's first name and last name), who has determined that having an ESA in the student's residence hall on the campus of NCCU*

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is medically necessary for (student's name) ongoing continued treatment. An ESA for (student's name) will be needed for alleviating one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of the student's disability;

6. A description of how the student's ESA specifically alleviates psychiatric or psychological symptoms, and how the ESA supports the student specifically in the residence hall setting within the university environment. Letters that provide general information on the "beneficial nature" of having an ESA will not be considered;
7. Name, age, and type of animal;
8. A statement to explain the student's capability of ensuring the health and well-being of an ESA, while still properly taking care of his/her own psychological and physical health needs within the context of being a university student; and
9. Any additional information the University may reasonably need to obtain in order to understand the basis for the professional opinion being rendered.