

Skidmore College
Emotional Support Animal Policy

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, a postsecondary educational institution may not exclude an otherwise qualified student with a disability from any part of its programs, services, or activities or otherwise discriminate against an applicant or student with a disability. Under the Fair Housing Act, persons with disabilities may request a reasonable accommodation of an assistance animal, including an emotional support animal, in housing when its use is necessary to afford a person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling and/or the common areas of a dwelling.

Emotional Support Animals (ESA)

Emotional Support animals mean any animal that provides comfort or alleviates one or more symptoms or effects of a disabling condition for a person with a qualified disability. Examples include but are not limited to lessening depression for those with depressive disorders, improve attention for those with Attention Deficit disorder, increase socialization and attention span for those with Autism or Asperger's.

Qualifications and Process

As a reasonable accommodation a student with a disability may request to have an ESA in a Skidmore residence hall or apartment. If there is no one who will room with the student and the assistance animal, the student may be liable for the cost of a single. Only animals that do not pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others, would not cause substantial physical damage to College property or the property of others, or do not fundamentally alter housing operations or academic programs will be considered for purposes of reasonable accommodation.

- The request must be made to the Coordinator for Student Access Services in advance to allow a thorough review; an animal that is brought to campus without advance approval will not be allowed into a hall.
- The request must include documentation from a licensed mental health professional (i.e., psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker) who has provided treatment for the disability and must include the following.
 - Evidence of the disability and the DSM diagnosis related to the use of an assistance animal; the dates of treatment and the date at which the diagnosis was first made; the symptoms for which treatment was needed; treatment(s) other than use of an assistance animal that have been used for symptom reduction; and the date on which the use of an assistance animal was prescribed.
 - Evidence of the connection between the diagnosis/symptoms and the use of the support animal.
 - Evidence that the student will not be able to use and enjoy the residence hall or to participate in the services or programs if the assistance animal is not allowed.

- The request must include a physical description of the animal including height and weight and confirmation that the animal is housebroken or confined such that housebreaking is not necessary (e.g., fish in a fishbowl). Also include any equipment that will be needed for the care of the animal.
- The request will be reviewed by a committee that is composed of representatives from Residential Life, the Counseling and Health Services, and Student Academic Services.

Responsibilities of the Handler

Anytime an ESA is outside of a residential dwelling the animal must be harnessed, leashed, tethered or otherwise under physical control of the handler.

In all cases, the handler must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.

The expense and responsibility to feed, provide health care, and necessary bathing and grooming of ESAs is the sole responsibility of the handler. ESAs must be in compliance with local licensing laws.

The handler is responsible for removing or arranging for removal of animal waste.

Violations of this policy will be referred to the Integrity Board.