

Five Fast Facts



Assistance Animals on Campus

Laws

Fact 1

Disability Law recognizes two types of assistance animals, Emotional Support Animals (ESA) and Service Animals (SA). A third type called Therapy Animals are used in conjunction with a handler or therapist during Animal Assisted Therapy and would not reside with nor accompany an individual on a college campus.

ESA

Fact 2

ESAs are pets that provide therapeutic support to their owners. To be designated as an ESA, the pet must be prescribed by a licensed mental health professional for a student with a mental illness. To bring the ESA on campus the student must have special permission from disability services. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not grant ESAs access to public areas.

Service Animals

Fact 3

Service Animals are usually dogs. In rare cases, a miniature horse may be an SA. Federal Regulations recognize only these two animals as Service Animals. SAs perform complex tasks related to their handler's disabilities. SAs are trained to attend to their handlers and ignore other people and animals. They must be house trained and must not wander, sniff, bark, or show aggression to people or other animals. SAs require extensive and expert training. They are usually trained by professionals and are very expensive. SAs with their handlers may enter any public building, room, or area where the public is allowed.

Permission to bring an animal on campus

Service Animals, by law, are allowed anywhere the handler is allowed, such as restaurants, stores, classrooms, dormitories, apartments and hospitals. No advanced or special permission is required.

Emotional Support Animals, on the other hand, require special permission to enter any area not open to pets. Students with special permission, from the university, may keep an ESA in their dorm rooms or other campus housing. ESAs are rarely allowed outside of student housing or designated pet toileting areas. Bringing an ESA on campus without permission is an honor code violation at most colleges.

The owners of both SAs and ESAs must provide humane care for their animals, they must clean up after their animals, and they are financially responsible for any damage or injuries caused by their animals. ESAs must meet all state and local pet ordinances.

Online Rip-Offs

There is no national or state registry for SAs or ESAs. Web sites claiming to be official registries or licensing bodies are all bogus. SAs and ESAs do not require ID cards or tags. Web sites selling these are also bogus. Many online stores sell collars, vests, harnesses and leashes with "Service Animal", "Service Dog", "Service Dog in Training", "Emotional Support Animal", "Therapy Dog", and many other variations printed in bold letters. Simply labeling an animal as an ESA or SA confers no privileges, is illegal in some cities and states, and does not fool the gatekeepers who are responsible for keeping fake SAs and ESAs out.

A number of internet sites sell letters purported to be prescriptions for ESAs from licensed professionals. Unfortunately, these too are bogus. A legitimate letter from an ethical mental health provider prescribing an ESA would include;

- Information about the handler's professional relationship with the provider (is this an ongoing therapeutic relationship or a diagnosis from a diagnostician with specialized knowledge or skills?).
- The diagnostic tools or techniques that the provider used (e.g. records review, interviews with client and others).
- Assessment instruments administered by the provider.
- Professional's rationale of client's need for ESA
- The professional's credentials and licensing information.

Fact 4

Fact 5