

CSU Health Network Guidelines Emotional Support Animals & Service Dogs Information for Students

Emotional Support Animal

An Emotional Support Animal is an animal that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. Documentation that a person has a *disability* requires more than a diagnosis of a medical or mental disorder. Disability documentation involves a professional's determination that a person's illness, injury, and/or condition *substantially limits one or more major life activities* for the individual. Once that determination is made, it must also be determined whether the Emotional Support Animal is necessary to provide you with equal opportunity to use and enjoy your residence, and if there is an identifiable nexus between your disability and the assistance the animal provides in alleviating the effects of the disability.

An Emotional Support Animal is not a pet. An Emotional Support Animal lives at home and does *not* accompany the student from place to place. Caring for this animal often enables the student to feel motivated, less depressed or anxious, and more able to connect with others. While dogs and cats are the most common type of Emotional Support Animals, other animals can provide emotional support if they can be appropriately cared for within the context of the dwelling. (Please note that an emotional support animal is rarely a puppy or kitten. Puppies and kittens require constant care and training. Owning and training a very young animal can be stressful and is contraindicated in the treatment of many mental health conditions.)

Service Dogs

Trained dogs are the primary species of animal that may qualify as a service animal under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ADA regulations define "service animal" narrowly as any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with an ADA recognized disability. Unlike Emotional Support Animals, a Service Dog accompanies the individual from place to place.

Important Information regarding Requests to CSU Health Network Re: Emotional Support Animal or Service Dog:

- You should discuss your need for an assistance animal BEFORE purchasing or relocating an animal!
- You generally must have been under the care of a CSU Health Network provider Counseling Services for one semester or longer so there is adequate opportunity to assess the existence of a disability and the nexus with the assistance the animal provides.
- Your provider must determine that you are impaired with an ADA qualifying mental disability. Your provider will outline the steps involved in making this determination.
- A *disability* is a condition which "substantially impairs" a person's ability to function in day to day life.
- Mild or even moderate depression or anxiety that is transient in nature and many learning challenges may not meet the criteria for a *mental disability*.
- Appropriate staff of CSU's Resources for Disabled Students (RDS) must approve all requests for Emotional Support Animals residing on campus. RDS also reviews requests for service dogs on campus and advise students as to the rules governing their use.
- Documentation of a student's need for an Emotional Support Animal, when approved by CSU Health Network, will be sent either to RDS (for on-campus housing) or directly to the student's off campus landlord (or the local Housing Authority, if relevant). The student must first give written consent for such disclosure.
- These same rules apply to any student requesting to take an Emotional Support Animal or Service Dog on board an airplane.

Students interested in acquiring either an emotional support animal or service dog should review the ADA guidelines and how they pertain to living on or off the CSU Campus. Kathleen Ivy at Resources for Disabled Students (491-6385) can provide more information.



