



HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL LIFE

OSU Housing and Residential Life Emotional Support Animal Policy and Responsibilities

Oklahoma State University Housing and Residential Life (HRL) supports students with disabilities who require Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) to have equal access to housing. This policy explains how to request, register, and care for ESAs in OSU Housing, in compliance with the Fair Housing Act.

Definition

- An **Emotional Support Animal (ESA)** is an animal that provides emotional support to alleviate one or more symptoms of a disability. ESAs are not service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For OSU Housing, generally, ESAs are dogs or cats. Requests for other animals to serve as an ESA will be considered on a case-by-case basis by a designated committee. Each resident may have no more than one (1) ESA. Approved ESAs are allowed only in the resident's assigned housing unit and are not permitted in other university areas such as classrooms, labs, dining facilities, or other residents' rooms.

Approval Process

- Owners/residents must obtain ESA verification from Student Accessibility Services (SAS). ESA approval requires HRL review. Students may not bring an ESA to campus until approval is granted. Unapproved animals may result in fines, damage charges, and/or disciplinary action.

Eligibility for ESAs in University Housing

- **Established Care and Handling Expectations:**
 - Information provided through the approval process may be used to assess whether the student has sufficient experience handling the animal and maintaining appropriate control in a communal environment.
 - Students should be aware of animals without an established routine, training, or familiarity with the handler may present significant challenges in a residence hall setting.
- **Animal Readiness, Training, and Behavior:**
 - University Housing expects all ESAs to exhibit a level of development and training consistent with successful community living. This includes but is not limited to: Reliable housebreaking (if applicable) and consistent behavioral control.
 - Ability to remain in the assigned space without causing disturbance
 - Absence of aggressive or destructive behaviors

- Animals that do not meet these expectations may be determined to be unsuitable for the residential environment.
- **Requested Documentation**
 - Completed SAS Verification and Intake Process
 - Animal Housing Process and Agreement
 - Signed ESA Policy and Responsibilities
 - Standard of Care Acknowledgment
 - Emergency Handler Information
 - Animal Information: species, breed, weight, birthdate, vaccination records (including rabies)
 - Animal Identification Form: animal name, photo
 - Roommate Notification
- Submit documentation **as early as possible**. Review may take up to sixty (60) days. Additional records may be requested.

Owner/Resident Responsibilities

The owner/resident is solely responsible for the care, control, and behavior of the ESA. Failure to follow these rules may result in animal removal and/or disciplinary action.

- **General Responsibilities**
 - Follow all city, county, and state laws and ordinances related to animal care, including vaccination and registration, before bringing the ESA to campus.
 - Provide the ESA's daily needs, including food, water, grooming, and general care. Roommates, friends, or other residents may not care for the ESA.
 - Ensure the ESA does not pose a threat or unreasonably disturb others.
 - Any evidence of neglect or abuse may result in immediate removal of the ESA and referral to disciplinary action without warning.
- **Supervision and Control**
 - ESAs must be on a leash outside the assigned room.
 - ESAs must stay with their owner in their assigned room and may not visit other rooms or buildings.
 - ESAs found loose or not under control may be captured, confined, and removed by university or animal control personnel. When the owner is away:
 - Dogs must be crated.
 - Cats must remain in the owner's room.
- **Time Away and Breaks**
 - ESAs must not be left alone for extended periods:
 - Dogs should not be left alone for more than six (6) hours.
 - Cats should not be left alone for more than eight (8) hours.
 - If the owner is not present, ESAs must be removed from campus during extended breaks. Allowing another individual to watch or care for an ESA while the owner is away is not permitted.

- **Emergency Care Plan**
 - The owner/resident must provide an off-campus emergency contact who can retrieve the animal within six (6) hours if the owner is unavailable.
 - The emergency contact must be prepared to coordinate with HRL staff to gain access to the residential space, including contacting the appropriate office and presenting identification if required.
 - If the emergency contact is unreachable or unwilling to assume care, and the owner fails to retrieve or arrange alternative care, HRL may consider the animal abandoned and place it with a local shelter or appropriate authority at the owner's expense.
- **Cleanliness and Waste**
 - The owner must clean up after the animal at all times, both inside and outside.
 - Animal waste must be picked up and disposed of in an outdoor dumpster or designated animal waste station.
 - Animals must use appropriate outdoor areas (grass only; not sidewalks, flowerbeds or building areas).
 - Cat Litter Box Care:
 - Daily: Scoop waste at least once or twice a day.
 - Weekly: Place used litter in a bag and wash the box with hot water and mild soap.
 - Used litter must be sealed and disposed of in outdoor dumpsters promptly.
- **Health and Inspections**
 - University housing staff may inspect rooms for cleanliness, pests and animal care at any time.
 - If fleas, ticks, or other pests are found, the space will be treated. The owner will be charged with any additional costs.
- **Damages and Charges**
 - The owner is responsible for any damage caused by the ESA beyond normal wear and tear.
 - This may include, but is not limited to:
 - Flea treatment
 - Carpet/tile replacement
 - Furniture damage
 - Odor removal or deep cleaning
 - All charges will be billed to the owner's Bursar Account and communicated through the owner's university email.
- **Animal Removal and Violation**
 - **Minor or Correctable Violations**
 - Residents may receive up to two (2) verbal warnings from hall staff for minor or correctable violations, followed by email documentation.
 - If the behavior continues, a final written warning will be issued.

- Continued violations after the final warning will result in a meeting with the assistant director of residential living. Outcomes will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- **Written Warnings** (may be issued for, but are not limited to the following):
 - Non-compliance with HRL policies or guidelines; and/or
 - Excessive damage caused by the ESA (for example, flooring replacement due to odor/stains, irreparable furniture damage or replacement of university property or fixtures).
- **Serious Violations and ESA Removal**
 - HRL may require removal of an ESA for:
 - A direct threat to the health or safety of others or unmanageable behavior despite reasonable interventions;
 - Substantial property damage, as assessed by HRL or Facilities Management;
 - Neglect or abuse of the ESA; and/or
 - Ongoing disruptions to the community or interference with the living environment.
- **Procedures for Removal of an ESA**
 - Removal may be immediate in cases of abuse, neglect, or serious safety concerns.
 - Decisions are based on the ESA's actual behavior, not speculation or fear.
 - HRL will provide written notice of removal to the owner and, if applicable, the Office of Student Conduct. HRL may work with Student Accessibility Services during this process.
 - The owner remains responsible for housing obligations and fees, even if the ESA is removed.
 - In the case of abuse or neglect, HRL may take additional steps to prevent contact between the ESA and the party believed to be responsible for the abuse or neglect at the owner's expense.
 - If a specific ESA is removed, the student does not lose their ESA accommodation. The accommodation still applies to the student, even if a particular animal cannot stay in the assigned space.
 - If the student chooses to bring a different animal as an ESA, they must complete the full registration and approval process before bringing the new animal into housing. The new ESA is not approved automatically, and approval must be received before the animal may be brought to campus.
- ESA removal decisions may be appealed to the Associate Director of Residential Living.

Housing and Room Assignment Considerations

- HRL may assign or reassign housing to reasonably accommodate ESAs and community needs.
- Roommate consent is not required for the ESAs; however, roommates will be notified. HRL will address conflicts through reassignment, if needed.

- If a conflict arises (such as allergies or safety concerns), HRL will work with all residents to find a reasonable solution, which may include reassignment. To request a room change, submit a Room Change Request Form. HRL will consider the ESA when reviewing the request. Approval may be modified if the animal is not suitable for the assigned space or creates an undue administrative or financial burden.
- In rare cases, maintenance or other emergencies may make a room unsafe or unavailable. If this occurs, the resident and the ESA may be temporarily reassigned until the issue is resolved. No transfer fee will be charged. However, residents remain responsible for any damage caused by the ESA.
- ESA accommodations are approved for the academic year (fall–spring). Renewal with HRL is required each year. Summer ESA housing must be approved separately.

Liability and Risk Acknowledgement

- The owner/resident assumes full responsibility for any injury, damage or loss caused by the ESA and agrees to hold OSU and its personnel harmless.
- OSU personnel are not responsible for care of, injury or loss of the ESA.
- Residents are encouraged to carry renters or animal liability insurance.

Non-Retaliation

- OSU will not retaliate against any resident who seeks, requests or receives reasonable accommodations.

Student Confirmation

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understand the OSU Emotional Support Animal Policy and Responsibilities. I agree to follow all rules and requirements related to having an animal in university housing.

I understand and agree to the following:

- Complete all required steps and receive approval before bringing my ESA to campus;
- Care for, supervise, and control my ESA at all times;
- Ensure my ESA does not pose a threat or cause damage;
- Follow all local, state, and federal laws, including vaccination requirements;
- Remain responsible for all care, behavior, cleanliness, and damage caused by my ESA;
- Respond to HRL staff requests and cooperate with university policies;
- Accept that violations may result in ESA removal and/or student conduct action;
- Annual Renewal with HRL to continue the need for an ESA accommodation.

Important: Emotional support animals may not be brought into or live in university housing until approval has been granted by HRL. Failure to comply with may result in fines, additional charges for cleaning or damage, or disciplinary action.

I understand failure to follow these rules may result in the loss of my ability to keep an ESA in university housing. I also understand that HRL may update these policies as needed.

I understand that in the event of an emergency (including but not limited to fire alarms, evacuations, severe weather, or other urgent situations), HRL staff and emergency personnel are not responsible for the care, evacuation, or safety of my ESA.

I acknowledge it is my responsibility to have an emergency plan in place for my ESA, including arranging for its safe removal if I am unable to do so.

Signature: