

Policy Number/Title:	3.5.1 Emotional Support Animal Policy for Students
Effective Since:	May 15, 2025
Last Revision Approved:	08/01/2017
Responsible Office:	VP for Student Affairs

1. Scope:

Use of Emotional Support Animals in Residential Campus Housing by Approved Students

2. Definitions:

1.0 Specific meanings of bolded terms seen throughout this policy can be found within the University's Policy Definitions Glossary by following the link below.

1.1 <http://www.winthrop.edu/policy-definitions-glossary/>

Emotional support animals alleviate one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. The Owner trains their emotional support animal. In some cases, no special training is required. Unlike a service animal, an emotional support animal does not assist a person with a disability with activities of daily living, nor does it always accompany a person with a disability.

Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Other animals, whether wild or domestic, do not qualify as service animals. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, and/or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

3. Policy:



1. GENERAL

- 1.1 Winthrop University allows students with disabilities the use of an approved emotional support animal (ESA), as appropriate, in campus housing to facilitate their full benefit of the residential experience. For students living on campus, the Fair Housing Act (FHA) provides that emotional support animals may be considered a reasonable accommodation in campus housing. The University recognizes the importance of emotional support animals to students with disabilities and has an established policy unique to this category of animals.
- 1.2 Emotional support animals are permitted within the privately assigned living area (room, apartment, or suite) in all housing facilities, provided the student has received prior approval and complies with all University established regulations and requirements.
- 1.3 The University Office of Accessibility must approve all emotional support animals on campus. Any student wishing to exercise their right to have one emotional support animal in university housing must first acquire approval through the Office of Accessibility and then confirmation from Residence Life prior to bringing an animal to campus.
- 1.4 Bringing a non-approved animal into on-campus housing may result in a monetary fine as well as a loss of privileges related to having an emotional support animal.
- 1.5 This policy only applies to housing facilities in accordance with the Fair Housing Act. Animals are prohibited from other areas of campus and may not be allowed in other areas of campus (e.g., library, academic buildings, classrooms, labs, campus center, or other residence halls, etc.), unless approved as an additional accommodation except on a case-by-case basis.
- 1.6 In general, small domestic animals commonly kept in households (e.g. cat, dog, rabbit, turtle, hamster, gerbil, guinea pig) may be permitted, provided they do not require live food on the premises and have appropriate size containment. Non-domesticated, wild, dangerous, venomous, and/or illegal animals are not permitted. Rodents (other than hamsters, gerbils, and guinea pigs), arachnids, reptiles (other than turtles), and other exotic animals are not permitted. Any request may require additional veterinary documentation regarding the level of zoonotic threat and level of contagion given the health and safety issues unique to the type of animal and shared student housing. Cats and dogs should be old enough for preventative pest control and to have completed their series of



recommended vaccines per their veterinarian, which is generally between 4 to 5 months of age. Emotional support animals must be reliably housebroken.

- 1.7 Animals must have a crate, kennel, or cage that is the appropriate size for the animal. Specifically for dogs, the containment must be large enough for it to stand, turn around, and lie down comfortably. If the containment size required creates a safety hazard or infringes on space use of other people in the living unit, that specific animal may not be approved. The Owner must ensure that the emotional support animal, accompanying containment, and necessary supplies do not block evacuation routes or egress in case of an emergency.
- 1.8 In general, only ONE emotional support animal per living unit is allowed.
- 1.9 Animals whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as a service animal.
 - 1.9..1 For the purposes of this policy, comfort and therapeutic companion animals will be referred to as **emotional support animals**, which are not considered **service animals** under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
 - 1.9..2 This document does not address **service animals**, except to clarify their definition.

2.0 Required Documentation

- 2.1 In order for an accompanying emotional support animal to be considered a reasonable accommodation, the individual with the disability must be the animal Owner and sufficient documentation meeting the requirements of current federal fair housing regulations must be provided.
- 2.2 The University may consider whether the animal provides the benefit needed as a reasonable accommodation for the person with the disability.

Required documentation must be supplied by a licensed or otherwise properly credentialed professional (third-party) who has appropriate and comprehensive training, relevant experience, and no personal relationship with the individual being evaluated (current and dated within the last 12 months) and includes the following:

- The existence of a disability.
- A relationship between the disability and the relief the animal provides.
- Evidence of the necessity of an ESA in order for the resident to use and enjoy an on-campus residence.
- Please note on-line certifications typically do not provide the necessary information to support an ESA accommodation request.



- 2.3 To receive permission to have an emotional support animal in university housing or other university facilities, a student's eligibility for an ESA must be confirmed with Residence Life or other interested party by the Office of Accessibility and the student must comply with all related procedures.

KEYWORDS

"ESA, animal, Emotional Support Animal, service, therapy, comfort, emotional, support, pet, dog, cat,"

4. Procedures:

Policy Procedures

1.0 EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS

Winthrop University is committed to allowing students with disabilities the use of an approved emotional support animal, as appropriate, in campus housing to facilitate their full benefit of the residential experience. For students living on campus, the Fair Housing Act (FHA) provides that emotional support animals may be considered a reasonable accommodation in campus housing. The University recognizes the importance of emotional support animals to students with disabilities and has an established policy unique to this category of animals.

Set forth below are specific requirements and guidelines concerning the appropriate use and protocols associated with emotional support animals for students. Winthrop University reserves the right to amend this policy as circumstances require. The goal is to find the proper balance that serves the student with a disability while protecting health, safety, living, and study conditions for other students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Emotional support animals alleviate one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. The Owner is responsible for ensuring that their emotional support animal is adequately trained. In some cases, no special training is required. Unlike a service animal, an emotional support animal does not assist a person with a disability with activities of daily living, nor does it always accompany a person with a disability. For the purposes of this document, comfort and therapeutic companion animals will be referred to as emotional support animals, which are not considered service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This document does not address service animals, except to clarify their definition:

A "service animal" is a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Other animals, whether wild or domestic, do not qualify as service animals. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding a blind person, alerting a person who is deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and



protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, and/or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a service animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. **Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals.**

The University may consider whether the animal provides the benefit needed as a reasonable accommodation for the person with the disability. In order for an accompanying emotional support animal to be considered a reasonable accommodation, the individual with the disability must be the animal Owner and sufficient documentation meeting the requirements of current federal fair housing regulations must be provided.

This required documentation supplied must be provided by a licensed or otherwise properly credentialed professional (third-party) who has appropriate and comprehensive training, relevant experience, and no personal relationship with the individual being evaluated (current and dated within the last 12 months) and includes the following:

- The existence of a disability.
- A relationship between the disability and the relief the animal provides.
- Evidence of the necessity of an ESA in order for the resident to use and enjoy an on-campus residence.
- Please note on-line certifications are not recognized nor used to establish an animal as being an ESA.

Since these regulations only apply to housing facilities, the animals may not be allowed in other areas of campus (e.g., library, academic buildings, classrooms, labs, campus center, other residence halls, etc.), except on a case-by-case basis.

In general, small domestic animals commonly kept in households (e.g. cat, dog, rabbit, turtle, hamster, gerbil, guinea pig) may be permitted, provided they do not require live food on the premises and have appropriate size containment. Non-domesticated, wild, dangerous, venomous, and/or illegal animals are not permitted. Rodents (other than hamsters, gerbils, and guinea pigs), arachnids, reptiles (other than turtles), and other exotic animals are not permitted. Any request may require additional veterinary documentation regarding the level of zoonotic threat and level of contagion given the health and safety issues unique to the type of animal and shared student housing. Cats and dogs should be old enough for preventative pest control and to have completed their series of recommended vaccines per their veterinarian, which is generally between 4 to 5 months of age. Emotional support animals must be reliably housebroken.

In order to request access to an emotional support animal in university housing or other university facilities, the student must first work with the Office of Accessibility. In general, the presence of only one ESA will be approved for a student, in order to fulfill the intent of the FHA guidance in providing support to the person with a mental health



disability.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT CONCERNING HOUSING

It is the policy of Winthrop University that emotional support animals are permitted in all housing facilities, provided the established regulations and requirements below are met. Any student wishing to exercise their right to have one emotional support animal in university housing must initiate the approval process through the Office of Accessibility. Bringing and allowing any animal into housing that is not permitted by the Winthrop University Residence Hall Contract/Lease prior to obtaining approval as outlined below (Section III), may result in loss of privileges related to having an emotional support animal in the future.

3.0 PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING APPROVAL FOR AN EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMAL ON CAMPUS

Prior to bringing an emotional support animal to campus, students must contact the Office of Accessibility. The Office of Accessibility will engage in an interactive process with the student to discuss the Emotional Support Animal Responsibilities and Guidelines document, review appropriate documentation requirements, and to assess if the accommodation is reasonable.

Required documentation for a fall accommodation is due to the Office of Accessibility by May 15th for new students and February 1st for returning students. Applications submitted later will be considered and Winthrop University will make a good faith effort to provide reasonable accommodations but may not be able to guarantee that appropriate residential provisions will be completed within that semester.

The procedure to officially request an ESA is stated below:

Step 1. Complete the required paperwork for OA

An Emotional Support Animal Disability Verification Form (ESADVF) will need to be completed in its entirety by the resident student's treating specialist (licensed counselor, medical/psychiatric provider) and signed. This form will provide OA with the substantial information needed to deem the accommodation reasonable. Any documentation submitted in lieu of the ESADVF must include information that addresses each question asked in the OADVF. **Please note that on-line certifications typically do not provide the necessary information to support an ESA accommodation request.** A completed ESADVF provides the following information including but not limited to:

- Verification of the student's disability that causes a substantial limitation in a major life activity from the attending physician, psychiatrist, or another professional provider with whom the student has a sustained and ongoing therapeutic relationship.
- Details on how the animal serves as an accommodation for the documented disability.



· Details on how the emotional support animal affords the person with a disability an equal opportunity to use and enjoy living in a residence hall.

The resident student will need to complete and submit the Personal Statement Form (PDF download) giving rationale for their disability-related need for an ESA, as well as outlining the benefits of an ESA regarding the student's documented disability.

The resident student will need to obtain Signed certification from veterinarian stating the animal's current health record and vaccination history, and potential risk of zoonosis in the academic residential setting. Records should also include proof of the preventative pest/parasite control program recommended by the veterinarian. These records will be turned in to Residence Life in Step 7.

Step 2. Submit Paperwork to OA

Complete and submit the New Accommodation Request Form (online). This form will allow students to provide OA with the following required information:

- student contact information
- a completed ESADV
- the completed Personal Statement Form

Step 3. OA Review & Meeting with Student

OA will review the ESA request and will follow up with the student via email. The student will be asked to either provide additional information (if forms are not completed thoroughly or if the information submitted is not sufficient to determine if the request is reasonable) or to schedule an appointment with OA staff to engage in an interactive process (if all requested information is provided).

Attend OA appointment to discuss the request and to review common campus housing requirements.

Step 4. Confirmation of ESA Eligibility

The Office of Accessibility staff will inform Residence Life via email that the request for an emotional support animal accommodation is reasonable due to a disability. The student and Residence Life staff can continue with the next steps in the process and discuss available options for appropriate housing.

Step 5. Completion of Animal Information Form

The Office of Accessibility staff will provide the student with the **Animal Information Form**, which the student will need to submit to Residence Life. This form details information specific to the desired animal being requested so a determination can be made to the animal's appropriateness as an ESA living in campus housing.

- If an animal request needs to be reviewed to determine if it is appropriate for campus housing due to species or other factors, a committee involving OA and Residence Life staff will be convened to discuss concerns and make a decision.



- The outcome will not change the accommodation eligibility for an ESA.

Step 6. Roommate/Suitemate Agreement

The animal Owner's roommate(s) and/or suitemate(s) (if applicable) will be contacted by Residence Life to solicit acknowledgement of their willingness to live with an animal. All roommates or suite mates of the Owner must acknowledge and agree that the emotional support animal may be in residence with them.

If roommates were assigned to the housing BEFORE the animal Owner applied for housing or requested the accommodation, the original roommates will not be required to move if they are not in agreement; the animal Owner will have to accept another housing assignment. If one or more new roommates or suitemates do not want to reside in the living space with an emotional support animal already in place, those individuals will be given the option to move to an alternate location.

Step 7. Meet with Residence Life

Upon acknowledgement and agreement of an emotional support animal by roommate(s) and/or suitemate(s), Residence Life staff will notify the Owner via email, and they will then be required to meet with the Residence Director, Residential Success Coordinator, or Assistant Director of their assigned residence hall to review the **Emotional Support Animal Maintenance Agreement for the Residence Halls**. The Owner's meeting with the Residence Life staff member will include a review of expectations for behavior, responsibilities, and resources for animal care available to the Owner in and around their assigned residence hall. At this meeting, the Owner is expected to explain the kenneling/crating option they have chosen to use during times when University personnel must be in the residence, as well as provide a photo of the potential ESA, proof of a preventative pest and parasite control program, and appropriate signed vet documents showing proof of good health, reporting the level of zoonotic threat, animal's estimated age, and most recent vaccination history.

Step 8. ESA is Allowed in Residence Hall

Only after:

- A request for an emotional support animal has been deemed a reasonable accommodation by the Office of Accessibility,
- The animal has been deemed appropriate for campus housing,
- Roommates and suitemates have acknowledged to Residence Life their agreement to live with the animal,
- The Owner has met with their Residential Success Coordinator and supplied them with all necessary animal health documentation,

may a student bring an emotional support animal into university housing.

4.0 POLICY REGULATIONS AND STUDENT OWNER RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Residents with emotional support animals must comply with all state and local animal ordinances, as well as University housing policies and guidelines, and the Student Code

of Conduct. The Owner undertakes to comply with the following animal health and wellbeing requirements:

- Vaccination: In accordance with local ordinances and regulations the animal must be immunized against diseases common to that type of animal, such as the rabies, FELV, distemper, and Bordetella. If the animal is canine or feline, the Owner is responsible for the approved animal always wearing a collar with an ID tag and a current rabies tag.
- Health: Any animal living in Winthrop University housing should have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian. Documentation can be a vaccination certificate for the animal or a veterinarian's statement regarding the animal's health and level of zoonotic risk. The Owner is responsible for following a preventative pest, e.g., fleas, ticks, etc., and parasite control program. The University has authority to direct that the animal receives veterinary attention. Any approved animal that poses a zoonotic threat to the campus may be asked to be removed until it is no longer designated as a threat by a certified veterinarian.
- Control: If appropriate, the emotional support animal must be on a leash or carrier, unless it inhibits the animal's ability to be of service, when being transported to and from the hall. Otherwise, the emotional support animal must be under voice control. The Owner is always responsible for the actions of his or her emotional support animal. Emotional support animals should not disturb, annoy, or cause nuisance to other members of the community. Sensitivity to residents with allergies and to those who fear animals is important to ensure the peace of the residential community.

B. Emotional support animals must be reliably housebroken. The Owner is responsible for cleaning up all animal waste (both indoors and outdoors) in a timely and effective fashion. Animals that are not reliably housebroken will not be eligible to serve as an emotional support animal. Additionally, the Owner shall be fully and solely responsible for the disposal of animal waste. Animals living in cages or tanks must be maintained appropriately so as not to be a hazard or create odor. Failure to properly dispose of animal waste will result in a charge of violating University housing policies.

C. Emotional support animals will not be left alone for extended periods (overnight) in the Owner's room or apartment, or in the care of another residential student. If an emotional support animal is away from the Owner for longer than a reasonable time and is not being attended to as needed (food, time outside, etc.), or is creating a disturbance, Residence Life will contact the Owner or their emergency contact to remove the emotional support animal IMMEDIATELY. Such action may be taken by the University without liability. Any cost of removing the emotional support animal if the Owner is not present and prior arrangements have not been made for the emotional support animal to be removed or cared for, shall be the responsibility of the Owner.

D. The Owner's residence may be inspected for pests once a month or as needed, as are all university residence halls. Residence Life will schedule the inspection. If pests are detected through inspection, the residence will be treated using approved



extermination methods by a university approved pest control service. The Owner will be billed for the expense of any pest treatment beyond standard pest management in the residence halls.

E. The Owner is financially responsible for the actions of the approved animal including bodily injury or property damage, and any expenses incurred for cleaning beyond a standard cleaning of university premises. The Owner's responsibility covers but is not limited to deep cleaning to remove odors, replacement of furniture, carpet, windows, wall coverings, and the like. The Owner is expected to cover these costs at the time of repair and/or move-out. The University shall have the right to bill the student account of the Owner for unmet obligations.

F. Individuals with disabilities who are accompanied by emotional support animals must comply with the same rules regarding noise, safety, disruption, and cleanliness as people without disabilities. Emotional support animals must be well-behaved; this includes no excessive barking, whining, scratching, chewing, or aggression. Owners who violate this policy or these obligations may be required to remove the emotional support animal from the residence hall room or apartment.

G. During times when University custodial or Facilities Management personnel must be in the residence, the approved animal shall be properly kenneled/crated, or the Owner shall temporarily remove the approved animal from the residence. The containment must be appropriate for the animal's size, so it can stand, turn around, and lie down comfortably. The Owner must ensure that the emotional support animal, accompanying containment, and necessary supplies do not block evacuation routes or egress in case of an emergency.

H. Indoor Private Space Use: Emotional support animals must be always contained within the privately assigned residential room when the student is not present. Emotional support animals must be contained within the privately assigned residential area (apartment or suite) always. Common area closets may not be used to store emotional support animal materials and items. Residential bathroom facilities may not be used for bathing animals.

I. Indoor Public Space Use: Emotional support animals cannot interfere with the reasonable enjoyment of people sharing the space. Emotional support animals are not permitted in any public common spaces within the residence halls or apartments unless they are being transported to and from the hall, including but not limited to community/shared bathrooms, lounges, dining rooms, indoor recreational rooms, computer labs, and study rooms. Requests to take an emotional support animal into other areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Office of Accessibility.

J. Residents with emotional support animals will provide Residence Life with emergency contact information for an alternative, non-residential caregiver able to pick up the animal within 12 hours if the resident is unable or unwilling to provide adequate care for the



emotional support animal. The University will assume no responsibility/liability for the care or well-being of a resident's emotional support animal.

K. Residence Life may relocate the Owner and approved animal as necessary.

L. Approval of an emotional support animal is specific to the individual animal approved. The Owner must notify the Office of Accessibility and Residence Life in writing if the animal is no longer needed or is no longer in residence. To replace an emotional support animal with a different animal, the Owner must file a new request with the Office of Accessibility.

M. The University recommends the Owner maintain an air purifier that is appropriate for the square footage of the residence where the approved animal resides. This is a preventative measure to reduce any allergens in the air.

N. Should the approved animal be removed from the premises for any reason, the Owner is expected to fulfill his/her housing obligations, including the two-year campus housing residency requirement.

O. When changing buildings to a new campus housing location, the Owner must meet with the appropriate Residential Success Coordinator to create a new Maintenance Agreement. New vet records will only be required if current records on file are over one year old.

P. Any violation of the above rules and regulations (even just one incident), or misrepresentation of the animal, including medical/vaccination history, as well as misrepresentation of the student, including treatment history and disability related documentation, may result in immediate removal of the approved animal from the University and the Owner may be answerable to the Student Code of Conduct system. Owners will also be subject to a \$100 fine for each violation of this policy.

5. Resources:



- OA ESA Procedures August 2019 (WORD)
- OA ESA Disability Verification Form (ESADVF)
- Emotional Support Animal Owner Responsibilities and Guidelines (WORD)
- Emotional Support Animal Personal Statement (PDF)
- New Accommodation Request Form (online link)
(https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?WinthropUniv&layout_id=5)

6. History of Revisions:

05/15/2025 Minor Revisions to simplify and improve flow. Set age guide for cats and dogs based on recommended vaccine schedule. Used newest guidance and wording for commonly permitted/not permitted animals. Clarify the request procedure. Inclusion of Animal Information Form, and acknowledgement of OA/RL reviewing committee regarding requests specific to the type of animal requested. Specified animal containment size parameters.

08/01/2017 Minor Revisions

10/01/2016 Policy first established

7. Approvals:

Responsible Officer Signature/Date:

Vice President/Senior Administrator Signature/Date:

President Signature/Date: