

# Emotional Support Animals in Residence Halls

In accordance with the Fair Housing Act (FHA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Disability Support Services at Midwestern State University engages in an interactive and collaborative process with students in order to determine eligibility for requests for reasonable accommodations to its housing policy to allow students experiencing significant mental health issues to keep an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) in-residence.

MSU offers this preliminary guidance for those who are considering making a request for an ESA:

- Documentation of a significant mental health challenge and the associated need for an ESA must come from a mental health provider who knows you and understands your difficulties. Some websites sell certificates, registrations, and licensing documents for assistance animals to anyone who answers certain questions or participates in a short interview and pays a fee. Under the Fair Housing Act, a housing provider may request reliable documentation when an individual requesting a reasonable accommodation has a disability and disability-related need for an accommodation that are not obvious or otherwise known. In HUD's experience such documentation from the internet is not, by itself, sufficient to reliably establish that an individual has a non-observable disability or disability-related need for an assistance animal.
- The nature of communal living requires that MSU consider the needs of all students in residence. Therefore, even if the request to have an ESA is approved, it will not necessarily approve the specific animal requested. For example, some reptiles and rodents must be rejected because of safety and health concerns, as they may carry diseases which pose a threat to the general welfare of residents in a communal living environment.
- Our residence halls are generally not an animal-friendly environment. Approved ESAs will be restricted to your dorm room. They are not allowed in common areas in the residence hall, and must be crated when the owner is not in the room.
- Approved ESAs must not be left in the care of other residents, even for one night.
- Students bringing approved ESAs to campus are fully responsible for the ESA's behavior and for any damage caused by the ESA. If the ESA is disruptive in any manner, it must be removed within 24 hours of notice to the student.