

# OBERLIN

COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

## Emotional Support Animal Policy

Oberlin College & Conservatory recognizes the importance of an emotional support animal (ESA) to individuals with disabilities and has established the following policy regarding ESAs to assist people with disabilities. Below are specific requirements and guidelines concerning the appropriate use and protocol associated with ESAs. Oberlin College & Conservatory reserves the right to amend this Policy as circumstances require.

### **I. Definition:**

#### **Emotional Support Animal (ESA)**

An emotional support animal (ESA) is an animal that provides a therapeutic benefit to an individual by mitigating the symptoms of one or more of the individual's disabilities. The animal provides emotional support and comfort to individuals with psychiatric disabilities and other mental impairments. An ESA may be incorporated into a treatment process to assist in alleviating the symptoms of a person's disability. Unlike a service animal, an ESA does not help a person with a disability with activities of daily living, nor does it always accompany a person with a disability. This treatment occurs within the person's residence; therefore, an ESA may be kept in Oberlin College & Conservatory housing and is not allowed access to places of public accommodation. An ESA may not pose a significant risk to the health or safety of others. An ESA is not a pet (that is, an animal living with its owner for love, affection, and company).

A request for an ESA will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as described below.

### **II. Procedures for requesting to have an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) in College Housing**

An ESA may not reside in College Housing without the prior approval of the College. The Office for Disability & Access (ODA) and the Office of Residence Life (ResLife) collaborate on all ESA requests. Students planning to have their ESA reside in campus housing are required to follow the steps outlined below **before** bringing the animal to campus:

All required information for an ESA accommodation request must be submitted for consideration by:

- **June 1 for the Fall semester**
- **October 1 for the Spring semester**

Every effort will be made to accommodate requests received by the deadlines. After the above dates, ESA applications will be considered but will be subject to housing availability. The College cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet the late applicant's accommodation request. All housing requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Incomplete applications or those without disability documentation will not be considered.

### **Procedures:**

1. **Apply to Housing:** Students must first apply for housing through Oberlin's Office of Residence Life (ResLife) website using the following link: (If you currently live on campus, skip this step)  
<https://oberlin.starrezhousing.com/StarRezPortalX/17166E2C/1/1/Home-Home?UrlToken=DFDE8757>
2. **\*Complete and submit the online ODA Application Form and Meet with ODA Staff\*:**<https://whitney.accessiblelearning.com/s-Oberlin/ApplicationStudent.aspx>.  
An ODA staff member will review your application and send instructions with the following steps by email, including link invitations to complete an online housing accommodation request form and schedule a meeting with an ODA staff member.  
  
**\*Make sure to indicate that you are requesting Housing or Dining accommodations on the Application Form.**  
**\*\*Students already registered with the ODA can log in to their AIM student portal. Select >Additional Accommodation Request Form > Housing Accommodation Request Form.**
3. **Submit Documentation of Disability**  
Please submit the 'Emotional Support Animal Documentation' Form completed by your licensed medical or mental health provider, a color photo of your animal, and a copy of your animal's up-to-date vaccination records. After submitting the required documentation, an ODA staff member will notify the student if the documentation and other paperwork are sufficient to move forward.

[Documentation Guidelines and Forms.](#)

### **Pre-Approval Paperwork Checklist:**

- \_\_\_ Provider Documentation Form for ESA Requests
- \_\_\_ Color Photo of the Animal
- \_\_\_ Copy of animal's up-to-date vaccination records

**Documentation must be submitted to ODA Online or by the following options:**

**Snail Mail:**

Office for Disability & Access  
Oberlin College & Conservatory  
148 W College Street, Mudd Center, Room 205  
Oberlin, OH 44074

**Email:** [ODA@oberlin.edu](mailto:ODA@oberlin.edu)

**Fax:** 440-445-5589

#### **4. Schedule an Initial ESA Meeting**

With sufficient documentation, an ODA staff member will instruct the student via email to schedule an appointment with an ODA staff member. During this appointment, the student will engage in the following process with an ODA staff member:

- a. Provide self-reported information about their disability and the need for their ESA in College Housing.
- b. Review of documentation of disability and animal records (described in step 3). Additional documentation may be needed from the student's provider and ESA's veterinarian. This may involve an ODA staff member contacting the student's provider to obtain more information about the student's disability and ESA's impact. If this is necessary, an ODA staff will have the student fill out a release of information, granting permission to ODA to contact the provider.

#### **5. Review of Request:**

Applications will be considered through the ODA by the Housing/Dining Accommodation Review Committee (referred to as "The Committee") after **ALL** requirements are completed as outlined above. The submitted documentation and the student's self-reported information are used to evaluate the request. The Committee considers the student's current symptoms and limitations, the severity of the condition/disability, potential alternative accommodations, and the appropriateness and essential nature of the requested ESA. The Committee will review the request at The Housing/Dining Accommodation Review Committee Meeting, which occurs monthly. The student will be notified of The Committee's decision via email within 7 to 10 business days following the meeting.

#### **6. Required Follow-Up and Paperwork:**

If the Committee approves that the ESA can reside in college housing, an ODA staff member will notify the individual of their provisional approval, pending completing the steps outlined below. The ESA cannot live on campus until the steps below are met and the student receives clearance from ResLife. Unapproved animals or animals without obtained clearance from ResLife found on campus will be removed from College Housing. All expenses for the care/boarding of the animal are the responsibility of the owner and may be charged to the student's account if left unpaid. All vaccines and shots must be current for boarding.

- a. The student is instructed via email to:
  1. schedule a follow-up appointment with ODA to review the ESA Policy, which outlines responsibilities for maintaining an animal in the student's residence and
  2. provide Post-Approval Paperwork.
- b. Once the follow-up appointment has occurred, an ODA staff member will notify ResLife of the ESA approval and provide copies of the signed ESA policy, the vaccine records, and a color photo of the animal and the Post-Approval Paperwork. \*\*
- c. A ResLife staff member will contact the individual by email to provide clearance to bring the animal to campus once all the paperwork is received. This email must be presented to hall staff upon move-in.
- d. The individual must provide the following Post-Approval Paperwork to ResLife each year as applicable:

**Post-Approval Paperwork Checklist:**

- \_\_\_ Signed ESA Policy
- \_\_\_ Valid Lorain County Dog License\* (if applicable)
- \_\_\_ Roommate Agreement\*
- \_\_\_ Proof of Insurance\*
- \_\_\_ Up-to-date Vaccination Records\*

\*You are REQUIRED to ensure that ResLife always has a current copy of these documents. Failure to keep vaccinations and records current may result in removing the animal from College Housing.

*\*\*An approval does not automatically guarantee clearance to bring the animal to campus. ResLife will notify the individual when their ESA is cleared to reside in college housing. ESA cannot live on campus until ResLife sends clearance to the student. This clearance must be obtained each academic year.*

**Any student to provide knowingly false information about whether they have a disability for any purpose, including, but not limited to, a request to be allowed to keep an animal on campus, may result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. Such violations subject the person to disciplinary sanctions under the Student Conduct Policies. Among other things, providing false information regarding one's disability status adversely affects the ability of The College to respond to the legitimate needs of persons with disabilities.**

**III. Responsibilities of owners for maintenance of an ESA:**

**The following guidelines apply to all individuals who maintain an ESA unless the nature of the documented disability of the owner precludes adherence to these guidelines and permission for a variance from the guidelines has been granted.**

Care and supervision of the animal are the responsibility of the owner, including (1) maintenance of the health of the animal (with veterinary treatment, as necessary and appropriate), odor or disease (including but not limited to flea or tick infestation) in a manner such that the living space cleanliness is the same as living spaces without animals and (2) cleanup of the animal's waste and toileting the animal in areas designated by the College consistent with the reasonable capacity of the owner. Indoor animal waste, such as cat litter, must be placed in a sturdy plastic bag and securely tied up before being disposed of in outside trash receptacles. Litter boxes should be placed on mats so that waste is not tracked onto carpeted areas. The ESA must meet local health ordinances and be housebroken before being brought in to residence.

As the owner, you are required to ensure that ResLife always has a current copy of your ESA's vaccine records and proof of a Pet License. **Failure to keep vaccinations and records current may result in the removal of the animal from college housing.**

Damage to persons or College property caused by the animal is the responsibility of the owner, including any expenses incurred for cleaning above and beyond a standard cleaning or for repairs to College premises that are assessed after the individual and animal vacate the residence and the College reserves the right to bill the individual's account for such expenses.

- (1) An ESA must not unduly interfere with the routine activities of College Housing or cause unsafe conditions or create a continued nuisance for others who reside there. The College may place other reasonable conditions or restrictions on an ESA based on its nature and characteristics to prevent unsafe conditions or a continued nuisance.
- (2) An ESA must be crated/caged in the owner's living space when the owner is not present and always restrained on a leash when not in the owner's living space per college policy.
- (3) An ESA is not permitted in other residents' living spaces, lounges, lobbies, offices, or any other public area of the residence hall (other than the owner's living space and while being transported directly to/from the owner's living space), classrooms, dining halls or any other campus facilities without prior authorization from ODA.
- (4) An ESA may not be left unattended for a period (including but not limited to out-of-area travel) that interferes with or prevents the appropriate care of the ESA and maintenance of the living space. An ESA may not be left overnight in college housing to be cared for by another individual. The owner must take the ESA should they leave the living space for a prolonged period.
- (5) The ESA's owner must notify ResLife immediately if the ESA is missing and cannot be located.
- (6) ResLife may inspect the living space in which the ESA is maintained to investigate complaints or concerns regarding the ESA and confirm the owner's compliance with this policy's provisions.
- (7) An ESA that is not maintained reasonably and appropriately consistent with this Policy is subject to removal or relocation within seven (7) days after written notification to the owner. If the ESA is removed, the owner must fulfill their housing obligations for the remainder of the housing contract.
- (8) All roommates/suitemates of the owner must sign an agreement allowing the ESA to be maintained in the living area with them. If one or more roommates or suitemates do not approve, either the owner and ESA or the non-approving roommate(s)/suite(s) may be moved to a different living space, as determined by ResLife. Although decisions are made case-by-case, the student with the ESA will typically be moved if one or more of the suitemates does not approve.

(9) The owner must notify ODA and ResLife if the ESA is no longer needed as an ESA or is removed permanently from the living space. If later, the owner wants to request approval of the ESA (or another ESA), the owner must submit a new request for approval of an ESA according to this Policy.

(10) In an emergency or other event when the individual cannot provide routine care and supervision for the ESA, the animal will be removed from College Housing. All expenses for the care/boarding of the animal are the responsibility of the ESA owner and may be charged to the individual's account if unpaid. All vaccines and shots must be current for boarding. Oberlin personnel shall not be required to provide care or food for any ESA, including, but not limited to, removing the animal during emergency evacuation for events such as a fire alarm. Emergency personnel will determine whether to remove the animal and may not be held responsible for the care, damage to, or loss of the animal.

#### **IV. Conflicting Health Conditions:**

ResLife personnel will make a reasonable effort to notify residents in proximity to the living space in campus housing where an ESA will be maintained.

Students, resident staff, and faculty with a medical condition(s) that are affected by animals (e.g., respiratory diseases, asthma, and severe allergies) are asked to contact ODA if they have a health or safety-related concern about exposure to an ESA. ODA and ResLife will resolve exposure issues giving due consideration to the needs and reasonable accommodations of the individuals involved. Typically, the student with the ESA will be moved, though these decisions are made case-by-case.

#### **V. Guidelines for members of the College community regarding ESAs:**

**Members of The College community should abide by the following practices:**

- A. Do not touch or pet an ESA unless invited to do so by the owner.
- B. Do not feed an ESA.
- C. Do not separate or attempt to separate an owner from their ESA.
- D. Do not inquire for details about the owner's disabilities, as the nature of a person's disability is confidential unless the owner volunteers such information.

**By my signature below, I verify that I have read, understand, and abide by this Emotional Support Animal Policy.**

---

Resident Owner Signature

---

Date

---

ODA Representative

---

Date

---

ResLife Representative

---

Date

## **VI. ESA Information Form:**

Owner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Obie ID: T\_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Animal's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Animal: \_\_\_\_\_

In case of an emergency, off-campus contact who can get to the animal within 12 hours for the care of the animal:

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

The animal will be boarded if Oberlin college staff cannot reach your off-campus contact. Please indicate your preferred **local** boarding location in case of emergency\*:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\*All expenses for the care/boarding of the animal are the responsibility of the ESA owner and may be charged to the individual's account if left unpaid. (See Section III.10 of this policy). All vaccines and shots must be current for boarding. Alternative short-term care arrangements will be considered by ResLife staff on a case-by-case basis. Contact ResLife by email at [ResLife@oberlin.edu](mailto:ResLife@oberlin.edu) or by phone at 440-775-8472.

Physical description of the animal:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Please attach a photo of the approved animal, proof of vaccination, and health and city licensing, if applicable, to this form.**

## **VII. ESA Paperwork Checklist**

### **Pre-Approval Paperwork:**

- \_\_\_ Provider Documentation Form for ESA Requests
- \_\_\_ Color Photo of the Animal
- \_\_\_ Copy of animal's up-to-date vaccination records

### **Post-Approval Paperwork:**

- \_\_\_ Signed ESA Policy
- \_\_\_ Valid Lorain County Dog License\* (if applicable)
- \_\_\_ Roommate Agreement\*
- \_\_\_ Proof of Insurance\*
- \_\_\_ Up-to-date Vaccination Records\*

\*You are REQUIRED to ensure that ResLife always has a current copy of these documents. Failure to keep vaccinations and records current may result in removing the animal from College Housing.