



# Emotional Support Animal Policy

## **Emotional Support Animal Policy**

William Woods University is committed to the support of students with disabilities including housing accommodations request. William Woods is a residential college and the residential experience is understood to be an integral part of a William Woods education. William Woods is committed to the full participation of students with disabilities in all aspects of college life, including residential life.

The university generally prohibits animals from living in campus housing other than those defined by the Student Handbook. However, in accordance with Federal law (Fair Housing Amendments Act), the university will consider requests for accommodations to the housing policy to allow students with a disability, including but not limited to mental health issues, to keep an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) with them in-residence. An Emotional Support Animal is an animal that is deemed necessary by a medical provider to an individual with a disability as part of the individual's treatment plan. An ESA differs from a service animal in that the animal does not assist the person with activities of daily living nor does it accompany the individual at all times.

**No Emotional Support Animal may be kept in University housing at any time prior to the individual receiving approval as a reasonable accommodation pursuant to this policy.**

## **Responsibilities/Requirements for Emotional Support Animals in University Housing**

The individual with the disability using an Emotional Support Animal is responsible for the care or supervision of the Emotional Support Animal. The specific responsibilities and requirements for Emotional Support Animals in University Housing are set out in the Emotional Support Animal Forms for University Housing, which must be completed before an individual may keep an ESA in their University residence.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **A. William Woods University Community**

The community must allow Emotional Support Animals to reside with their owners in their residence hall room or suite once they are approved by The Office of Student Accessibility Resources (OSAR) as a disability related housing accommodation.

Contact Student Accessibility Resources if any questions or concerns arise relating to Emotional Support Animals including any additional questions regarding visitors to campus who have Emotional Support Animals.

Report any Emotional Support Animals who misbehave or any owners (or other individuals) who mistreat Emotional Support Animals to Residential Life.

### **B. Student Accessibility Resources**

Student Accessibility Resources is responsible for developing the necessary procedures for the University and facilitating the use of Emotional Support Animals by students on campus.

Student Accessibility Resources assists owners and the university community when questions or concerns arise relating to Emotional Support Animals on campus and seeks legal advice when necessary.

### **C. Residential Life**

The Student/Owner will notify roommate(s) about the approved housing accommodation of an Emotional Support Animal by completing the Roommate Notification Form, and submitting the Form to OSAR staff with appropriate signatures.

Students/Owners who have concerns about any matter affecting the use of an Emotional Support Animal with an approved housing accommodation should contact Residential Life. Issues or concerns that may arise during the academic year should be reported as quickly as possible.

Refrain from charging a fee for the Emotional Support Animals to reside in the residence hall, but may assess usual fees for any damages incurred.

The Director of Residential Life is responsible for the enforcement of this Policy, as it relates to Student/Owner responsibilities.

## **Accommodation Process for Emotional Support Animals**

### **A. Requests for Accommodation**

Students who request a housing accommodation for an Emotional Support Animal must contact the Office of Student Accessibility Resources no less than 60 days prior to arrival, in order to permit time to gather all necessary documentation. The Director of Student Accessibility Resources maintains resources to appropriately evaluate and approve reasonable requests for accommodations. Students are encouraged to seek the counsel of Student

Accessibility Resources at any point for guidance and information. William Woods University will make an individualized assessment of each request for an ESA.

To meet student requirements to have an Emotional Support Animal in University housing:

1. Students must have a disability as defined by the ADA.
2. Students must complete a Request for Reasonable Accommodations ESA/Service animal form and be approved through the Student Accessibility Resources office in conjunction with Residential Life, and other offices as needed.
3. Students must have an already established relationship with the animal.
4. Students must provide William Woods University with the name and contact information for someone who does not reside in University housing and who can take responsibility for the animal within twelve (12) hours should the owner be unable or unavailable to care for it.
5. Students must notify Student Accessibility Resources if the animal is no longer needed or is no longer residing on University property. If the animal will be replaced, the Student/Owner must submit a new request.

#### **B. Required Documents for ESA Accommodation Requests**

To request an ESA as an accommodation, a student must submit the following items. Requests for an ESA must include all requirements to be considered. These documents can be submitted by email, fax, in-person drop off, or by snail mail.

- Photo of animal
- Updated Vaccination Records
- ESA request form via Owlnet
- ESA letter from a qualified third-party mental health provider (see below for specific requirements for this letter)
- ESA Forms for University Housing-This will need to be signed by the student, Student Accessibility Resources staff and the roommate (if applicable). Once the housing forms are completed then the approval/denial will occur by email.

An ESA letter should include:

- Professional letterhead of the qualified third-party mental health provider
- Date of issue (letters are valid for 1 year from the date they are issued)
- Name of the patient to whom the letter concerns
- Doctor's confirmation that the patient is under their care for a specific mental or emotional disability
- Role of the Emotional Support Animal in the patient's treatment-what symptoms will be reduced by having an ESA

- The significance or consequences in the opinion of the provider, if the accommodation is not approved
- Brief details of pet, name, breed, etc.
- That they would recommend the patient have an ESA on campus and that it would be beneficial for their disability
- The name and signature of the licensed professional
- The name of the practice/clinic
- Phone number of the practice/clinic
- The type of medical license
- Any other supporting detail

ESA Letters should **not** be:

- A note from a physician on a legal pad
- From an unauthorized website/provider
- Only a one sentence letter
- From a provider who is unqualified to speak to the student's condition

Pursuant to University policy and to avoid conflicts of interest, healthcare professionals employed by the University are not permitted to provide supporting documentation for ESA requests.

### C. **Timeline for ESA Accommodation Requests**

In order to better serve you, the accommodation request and required documentation needs to be submitted **60 days prior to the first day of the Fall/Spring Semester**. For the 2022-2023 academic year, the deadline for priority registration are:

- **Fall 2022– June 22, 2022 (60 days before classes start on August 22, 2022)**
- **Spring 2023 – November 9th, 2022 (60 days before classes start on January 9th, 2023)**

These deadlines were established to provide the University with sufficient time to review requests, communicate with care providers, and for consideration to be given to all students who may be impacted by the animal in housing. For this reason, it is critical that requests and all supporting documentation are received by the posted submission deadlines.

While applications submitted after these dates will be accepted and considered, we cannot guarantee that William Woods will be able to meet late applicants' accommodation needs. If you have a need for an Emotional Support Animal/Service Animal which arises for the first time after a deadline, email [ada@williamwoods.edu](mailto:ada@williamwoods.edu) to make it known that you will be submitting a post-deadline request. OSAR will strive to determine and, for those deemed eligible, to consider the request after the deadline.

Please be aware, accommodations will not be automatically granted from one academic year to the next. Students may need to supply ongoing supporting documentation stating the student's progress, ongoing diagnosis and documenting the continued need for an Emotional Support Animal/Service Animal. A recommendation from Student Accessibility Resources for the accommodation of an Emotional Support Animal/Service Animal is subject to renewal each academic year as needed. Renewal meetings will occur in late Summer before each academic year.

#### **D. Criteria for Determining Reasonability of Emotional Support Animal**

Campus housing is unique in several aspects including the mandatory assignment of roommates for many individuals and the mandate that individuals must share a room or suite in certain residence halls. Student Accessibility Resources will consult with Residential Life in making a determination on a case-by-case basis of whether the presence of an Emotional Support Animal is reasonable.

A request for an Emotional Support Animal is unreasonable if the presence of the animal:

1. imposes an undue financial and/or administrative burden;
2. fundamentally alters William Woods University housing policies; and/or
3. is a direct threat to the health and safety of others or would cause substantial property damage to the property of others, including William Woods University property.

Residential Life may consider the following factors, among other factors, as evidence in determining whether the presence of the animal is unreasonable during housing assignments for students with Emotional Support Animals:

- Damage. The animal causes or has caused excessive damage to housing beyond reasonable wear and tear.
- Danger. The animal has been defined as a dangerous wild animal according to the Revised Statutes of Missouri.
- Age. An Emotional Support Animal must meet specific age requirements before they will be approved on campus. Animals that are too young to obtain rabies vaccinations are not allowed in the living environment on campus. The animal must be old enough to receive a rabies vaccination and recover from the vaccination before it may be allowed in the living environment on campus. A Dog must be 10 months of age or older before it will be approved for the living environment on campus. A Cat must be 1 year of age or older before it will be approved for the living environment on campus.
- Disease. The animal can potentially transmit zoonotic diseases.
- Health. The animal's presence would force another individual from individual housing (e.g. serious allergies).
- History. The animal has an unknown health history.

- Housebroken. The animal is not housebroken or is unable to live with others in a reasonable manner.
- Noise. The animal's presence otherwise violates individuals' right to peace and quiet enjoyment.
- Rabies. The animal is considered a high rabies-risk animal as defined by the Missouri Department of Health and Social Services.
- Safety. The animal poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the safety or health of the individual or others such as aggressive behavior towards or injuring the individual or others.
- Size. The size of the animal is too large for available assigned housing space.
- Vaccinations. The animal's vaccinations are not up-to-date.

### **University Removal of an Emotional Support Animal**

In the event the University must remove an Emotional Support Animal, the Student/Owner may still be required to fulfill the individual's housing agreement.

An Emotional Support Animal can be asked to leave or not allowed participation on campus if:

- Housebroken. The Emotional Support Animal is not housebroken or kept in a cage where waste cannot be managed effectively.
- Mistreatment or Neglect. The Emotional Support Animal is found to be neglected or mistreated and prompt corrective action is not taken. The Emotional Support Animal is physically ill or unreasonably dirty. The Emotional Support Animal or its presence creates an unmanageable disturbance or interference with the University community. Any Emotional Support Animals who misbehave or any owners (or others) who mistreat Emotional Support Animals should be reported to Residential Life.
- Noncompliance. Emotional Support Animals are not allowed anywhere on campus except the Student/Owner's residence hall. An Emotional Support Animal may be removed from campus if it is found in any other building on campus or on restricted campus grounds, other than the Student/Owner's residence hall and the surrounding grounds. The Student/Owner does not comply with the Responsibilities set forth above.
- University Program Alteration. The Emotional Support Animal's presence results in a fundamental alteration of a University program.

Please reach out to [ADA@WilliamWoods.edu](mailto:ADA@WilliamWoods.edu) for more information regarding this policy.