

# Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Policy and Request

Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC) believes that disability is a naturally occurring aspect of humanity's diversity and is an integral part of society and the college. Northwest Iowa Community College believes in working collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff to provide accessible and equal opportunities for all students. Students with disabilities are encouraged to connect with the Student Accessibility Services Office to begin the individualized process of determining reasonable accommodations. For further information, contact the Student Accessibility Services Coordinator, Renee Franklin, at 712-324-5061 ext. 116 or [disabilityserv@nwicc.edu](mailto:disabilityserv@nwicc.edu). Any student who believes he/she may have been unlawfully denied accommodations may report a violation to the college pursuant to the Discriminatory Harassment and Accommodations Complaint Procedures policy. The College prohibits retaliation for requesting or using disability accommodations and NCC will impose consequences up to and including termination of employment of any Instructor who engages in retaliation.

NCC recognizes the importance of "Service Animals" as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), and of Emotional Support Animals (ESAs), supported by the Fair Housing Act. The college is committed to allowing individuals with disabilities the use of a Service Animal on campus to facilitate their full participation and equal access to NCC's programs and activities. NCC is also committed to allowing ESAs, necessary to provide individuals with mental health disabilities, an equal opportunity to use and enjoy Northwest Iowa Community College housing. This Policy explains the specific requirements applicable to an individual's use of an ESA in NCC housing. NCC reserves the right to amend this Policy as circumstances require. This policy applies solely to ESAs that may be necessary in college housing. It does not apply to "service animals" as defined by the ADAAA.

Although it is the policy of NCC that individuals are generally prohibited from having animals of any type in college housing, NCC will consider a request by an individual with a disability for reasonable accommodation from this prohibition to allow an ESA that is reasonable and necessary because of a mental health disability. However, no ESA may be kept in college housing at any time prior to the individual receiving approval as a reasonable accommodation pursuant to this Policy.

## Definition of an Emotional Support Animal (ESA)

An Emotional Support Animal (ESA) is an animal that provides therapeutic emotional support for an individual with a diagnosed mental health disability. Unlike service animals that are trained to perform specific tasks that are important to the independence or safety of their disabled handler, ESAs are generally not trained to perform disability-specific tasks. Their therapeutic support is a function of their presence and interaction with the person with a disability. ESAs are not pets, but are typically are animals commonly kept in households as pets. An ESA may be a dog, cat, small bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, fish, turtle, or other small, domesticated animal that is traditionally kept in the home for pleasure. Under guidelines from HUD, reptiles (other than turtles), barnyard animals, monkeys, and other non-domesticated animals are not considered common household animals. Exceptions to these guidelines regarding animals serving as ESAs will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The question in determining if an ESA will be allowed in college housing is whether or not the ESA is necessary, because of the individual's disability, to afford the individual an equal opportunity to use and enjoy college housing, and its presence in college housing is reasonable. However, even if the individual with a disability establishes necessity for an ESA and it is allowed in college housing, an ESA is not permitted in other areas of the college (e.g. dining facilities, libraries, academic buildings, athletic buildings and facilities, classrooms, labs, or other college property).

## Number of Animals

In most instances, only one animal will be approved to be in residence in a single residence hall room.

## Size of Animal Crate/Cage

An ESA should be crated when the student is not in the room. The size of crate/cage should be an appropriate size for the space available in the housing unit. The NCC Coordinator of Residence Life can assist with determining these dimensions. NCC furniture cannot be removed from the resident's room.

## Rules and Restrictions

The care of the ESA is the sole responsibility of the student.

- Animals must be licensed in accordance with Sheldon City regulations and, if applicable must wear a valid vaccination tag.
- Animals must be up to date on vaccinations and must have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian.
- The owner is responsible for appropriate care, including feeding, watering and exercising the approved animal.
- The owner is responsible for waste clean-up and the cleanliness of the animal.
- The owner of an ESA is responsible for all transportation to and from the college, including vet appointments.
- The owner is responsible for maintaining control of the approved animal at all times. Disruptive, destructive or aggressive behavior on the part of the animal may result in the owner being asked to remove the animal from college facilities.
- The owner is responsible for the cost of any repairs associated with damage to College property caused by an approved ESA.
- While on campus, approved ESAs must be cared for by the owner at all times, they may not be left overnight in the care of another student.
- While on campus, approved ESAs must only reside in the residence hall room assigned to the owner. The approved ESA may not go to the other residence halls, may not be in the common areas (game room, lounges, study rooms) and may not go into other student's rooms.
- If approved ESA is going from the owner's room to the outdoors, the ESA must be on a leash or carried by the owner in the hallways.

Failure to abide by the ESA policy may result in a written warning, fine, or the removal of the ESA from on-campus housing.

## Request for an Emotional Support Animal

The student and appropriate health care provider should complete the Request for an Emotional Support Animal form on pages 3-5. Return it to the Student Accessibility Services Office.

The student request will be evaluated by the Student Accessibility Services Office. A recommendation regarding the housing accommodation request will then be sent to the student and to the Coordinator of Residence Life.

Returning students must submit a new Request for an Emotional Support Animal Application every semester to continue to be able to house their ESA in campus housing. You will not need to submit new documentation from a medical provider.

## Registration Requirements

If approved, the student will complete the Emotional Support Animal Registration Form provided by the Coordinator of Residence Life. The student will also need to submit a copy of the required vaccinations/ health records (if applicable), and a copy of a spay/neuter certificate (if applicable) to the Coordinator of Residence Life. The vaccination and spay/neuter certificates must be signed by a licensed veterinarian. Required vaccinations may include distemper, adenovirus, parvovirus, parainfluenza, and rabies. An ESA should not move into the dorm until all Student Housing items are satisfied. If an ESA is approved after a housing assignment is made, it is the student's responsibility to communicate with their assigned roommate(s). If your ESA should change, please contact the Coordinator of Residence Life at HousingGroup@nwicc.edu or 712-324-5061 ex. 226 to complete a new ESA Registration Form.

# Request for an Emotional Support Animal



## Student

Please sign this form before providing it to your mental health provider to complete.

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed ESA (if identified):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Animal (and breed): \_\_\_\_\_ Age of Animal: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below, I consent to allowing my health care provider to share any information relevant to my need for an ESA as an accommodation, as shown on this form, with Northwest Iowa Community College Student Accessibility Services Personnel or NCC Administration for the next 60 days.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Health Care Provider

*(The health care provider need not use this specific form, but all the information requested here is necessary for the institution to have in order to consider the request for an ESA; the form is provided as a convenience.)*

The above-named student has indicated that you are the health care provider who has suggested that having an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) in the residence hall will have therapeutic benefit in alleviating one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of the student's mental health disability. Generally, we prefer documentation from providers in the State of Iowa or the student's home state who have personal knowledge of the student, consistent with their professional obligations. Letters purchased from the internet for a set price rarely provide the information necessary to support an ESA request.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has been asked to investigate websites that purport to provide documentation from a health care provider in support of requests for an ESA. The websites in question offer for sale documentation that is not reliable for purposes of determining whether an individual has a disability or disability-related need for an ESA because the website operators and health care professionals who consult with them lack the personal knowledge that is necessary to make such determinations.

So that we may better evaluate the request for this accommodation, please answer the following questions:

### Information About the Student's Disability

1. Does the individual identified above have a disability as defined by the ADA? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
2. If yes, is the need for an ESA related to that disability or would an ESA alleviate one or more symptoms or effects of the disability? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please describe the disability.

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### Information About the Proposed ESA

Please note that there are some restrictions on the kind of animal that can be approved for the residence hall; it is possible the student may be approved for an ESA, but may not be allowed to bring the specific animal named.

Is the animal named here one that you specifically prescribed as part of treatment for the student, or is it a pet that you believe will have a beneficial effect for the student while in residence on campus?

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What specific symptoms will be reduced by having an ESA, and how will those symptoms be mitigated by the presence of the ESA?

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Is there evidence that an ESA has helped this student in the past or currently?

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### Importance of ESA to Student's Well-Being

In your opinion, how important is it for the student's well-being that an ESA be in residence on campus? What consequences, in terms of disability symptomology, may result if the accommodation is not approved?

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This student was provided with a copy of the rules and restrictions surrounding the presence of an animal in the residence halls. Has the student shared those restrictions with you? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Have you discussed the responsibilities associated with properly caring for an animal while engaged in typical college activities and residing in campus housing? Do you believe those responsibilities might exacerbate the student's symptoms in any way? (If you have not had this conversation with the student, we may discuss them with the student at a later date.)

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*Thank you for taking the time to complete this form. If we need additional information, we may contact you at a later date. The named student has signed this form (page 3) indicating written permission to share additional information with us in support of the request.*

*We recognize that having an ESA in the residence hall can be a real benefit for someone with a significant mental health disorder, but the practical limitations of our housing arrangements make it necessary to carefully consider the impact of the request for an ESA on both the student and the campus community.*

Please provide contact information, sign and date this questionnaire (below), and return it to **Student Accessibility Services Office, Northwest Iowa Community College, 603 West Park Street, Sheldon, IA 51201** or fax **712-324-4157, Attn: Accommodations Services**

Name and Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax and/or Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Professional Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of License: \_\_\_\_\_ License #: \_\_\_\_\_

Non-Discrimination Policy: It is the policy of Northwest Iowa Community College not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, creed, religion, and actual or potential parental, family or marital status in its programs, activities, or employment practices as required by federal and state civil rights statutes and all other applicable federal and state laws, regulations and orders. The Board of Trustees shall monitor progress on this policy through the President's appointed Affirmative Action/Equity Coordinator(s).

If you have any questions or complaints related to compliance with this policy, please contact one of the Equity Coordinators at Northwest Iowa Community College, 603 West Park Street, Sheldon, Iowa, room D403b or room A101D, email equity@nwicc.edu, phone number 712-324-5061, extension 113 or extension 137, fax 712-324-4136; or the Director of the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, John C. Kluczynski Federal Building, 230 S. Dearborn Street, 37th Floor, Chicago, IL 60604-7204, Telephone: (312) 730-1560, Fax: (312) 730-1576, TDD: (800) 877-8339, Email: OCR.Chicago@ed.gov.