

Emotional Support Animals

An emotional support animal (ESA) is a dog, cat or other common animal that provides support to its disabled handler through companionship, affection, non-judgmental regard and/or being a distraction from the issues of everyday life. Each ESA belongs to a particular individual who must be diagnosed with a mental disability that significantly limits one or more of his or her daily life activities. This diagnosis must be made by a qualified mental health professional.

Emotional Support Animals in Florida Housing

Under Federal Fair Housing Laws, people with disabilities who have service dogs and other assistance animals are entitled to full and equal access to housing, even if there is a no-pet policy in place. Your landlord may *not* require you to pay extra to have an emotional support animal, although you are liable for any damages your animal causes to the property or to another person.

The Federal Fair Housing Act requires housing facilities to allow emotional support animals, if necessary for a person with a disability to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the home or residence. To fall under this provision, you must have a disability and you must have a disability-related need for the animal. In other words, the animal must alleviate the emotional effects of your disability in order to qualify. You must also have the appropriate documentation from a qualified mental health professional in order to legally have an animal defined as an emotional support animal. Additionally, the ESA must comply with community species regulations including registration and vaccinations.

Emotional Support Animals and Travel

The federal laws do not offer protection for ESAs in hotels, resorts, inns or any other form of lodging. These locations may legally charge a pet fee for ESAs or prohibit them from entering the establishment if there is a no-pet policy in place. Most airlines have their own specific policy on how to approve and address passengers traveling with an ESA. You can travel without any additional fees if you have an ESA letter (dated within one year of travel) and you must comply with their requirements such as: appropriate behavior from your ESA, calmness on the airplane, and some require proof of up to date vaccinations.

Additional Notes

In many locations ESAs can legally be banned from entry or additional fees may be charged. This includes restaurants, retail stores, malls, pools, recreations facilities and hotels. Employers are not required to allow ESAs at work. It is up to an employer's discretion if they will approve or deny your request to bring your ESA to work.

3 TYPES OF

SUPPORT ANIMALS



COMPARISON	SERVICE DOGS	THERAPY DOGS	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
ADA covered: Rights to bring animal into public establishments	✓	✗	✗
Needs to tolerate a wide variety of experiences, environments, people	✓	✓	✗
May live with their Disabled owners, even if "No Pets" policy in place	✓	✗	✓
Primary function is to provide emotional support, through companionship	✗	✗	✓
Specifically trained to assist just one person	✓	✗	✗
Provide emotional support and comfort to many people	✗	✓	✗