Emotional Support Animal (ESA) [also referred to as companion, therapy or support animal]

An emotional support animal is not just a pet, but rather a companion animal that provides a therapeutic benefit to its owner through companionship. The animal provides emotional support and comfort to individuals with psychiatric disabilities and other mental impairments. An ESA is an animal prescribed by a treating physician or mental health counselor to play an integral part of a person’s treatment process. It is an animal that works, provides assistance, or performs tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, or provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identifiable symptoms or effects of a person’s disability. The animal should demonstrate a good temperament and reliable, predictable behavior. Likewise, an ESA is not a service animal. Unlike a service animal, an ESA does not assist a person with a disability with activities of daily living, nor does it accompany a person with a disability at all times.

Emotional Support Animals may be permitted on campus and/or campus housing on a case-by-case basis. Before bringing a support animal onto campus grounds, the requesting individual must submit appropriate paperwork (see below) and be approved. Requests for a support animal will be evaluated by the appropriate office(s). A person requesting an ESA must provide Disability Services with appropriate documentation very early in the selection/application housing process. Westminster College may require a resident with an ESA to cover the cost of repairs for damage the animal causes to the dwelling unit or the common areas (reasonable wear and tear expected). Emotional Support Animals must be in compliance with state, county, and city laws regarding animals. ESA’s cannot be animals that are generally considered to be wild animals.

Procedures for requesting an ESA:

Students initiate a request by sending an email to Disability Services (disabilitieservices@westminstercollege.edu) detailing the nature of the request. Documentation from a qualified professional that establishes the nature of the disability and the need for an ESA must be submitted to Disability Services as well (see below). Insufficient documentation may result in a delayed decision and/or a denial.
Procedures

1. Documentation from a qualified licensed professional (not a family member) which includes:
   □ Confirmation that applicant has a disability, which substantially limits one or more major life activities;
   □ An explanation describing how the ESA assists with the disability;
   □ The date when medical diagnosis prescribed such an animal; and
   □ A clear definition of the relationship between the disability and the assistance the animal provides.
   □ All documentation must be provided on official letterhead of the professional describing the disability, as well as, the name, title, and professional credentials of the evaluator, and the signature of the evaluator.

2. Documentation from the prospective or current resident must include:
   □ A letter explaining the need for the animal;
   □ The type of animal;
   □ A description of the animal;
   □ The animal’s name;
   □ A current photograph of the animal;
   □ The date the animal was acquired; and
   □ Vaccination records (up-to-date/current).

3. Optional Documentation:
   □ If the animal has received formal training in provision of a service, a copy of the therapy/emotional support animal certification form or ID card from the agency or organization that provided the training would be helpful but is not required. If the animal was trained by the owner or another private individual, provide a brief statement to this effect.

Review Process

1. Disability Services will review the documents and determine if a qualifying disability exists for an ESA.
2. Disability Services and Residence Life will meet to review and discuss the request or Disability Services will email Residence Life the appropriate documentation for review and approval.
3. Disability Services will notify the requesting individual, in writing, of the decision within ten (10) business days of the date Disability Services and Residence Life review the request or within ten (10) business days the email is sent to Residence Life requesting approval.
4. To complete the process, the student will be required to meet with Residence Life within one week of moving ESA on campus to sign the ESA Agreement.