

Emotional Support Animal (ESA) POLICY



Purpose and Overview

Meridian Community College (MCC) is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all students. Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) may be approved as a reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities to ensure equal access to College housing. This policy outlines the procedures, expectations, and responsibilities related to the approval and presence of ESAs in campus housing.

Eligibility and Approval Process

All Emotional Support Animal requests must be submitted to the Accessibility Services Office. Students must complete the **intake form** and provide documentation from a **licensed healthcare provider** who is not related to the student stating the student's disability, the student's disability-related need for an ESA, and what symptoms or effects of the disability that the ESA alleviates.

Students must also provide a **current vaccination record** for any animal species that receives vaccinations, and a **recent veterinary wellness report** confirming that the animal is clean, healthy, and free of communicable diseases.

Once the Accessibility Services Office decides if the ESA is approved, this documentation will then be sent over to Campus Housing for their approval.

An ESA will not be permitted in Campus Housing that:

- Has not been approved by the Accessibility Services Office
- Poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others
- Would cause substantial physical damage to college property or the property of other residents
- Would create an undue administrative or financial burden
- Would fundamentally alter the nature of MCC's housing operations

Standards for Approved Emotional Support Animals

Approval will be granted for one (1) Emotional Support Animal per student.

An ESA may be a dog (most common), cat, small bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, fish, or other small domesticated animal traditionally kept in the home for companionship and pleasure. Under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, reptiles, barnyard animals, monkeys, and other non-domesticated animals are **not considered common household animals**. Non-traditional animals such as tropical fish, parakeets, bearded dragons, hedgehogs, and ferrets may have been bred by humans for multiple generations, but are **not considered domesticated animals**.

There are no restrictions on animal breeds; however, animal breeds and animal sizes will be approved on a case-by-case basis to ensure compatibility with the housing environment.

All approved animals must comply with all applicable college and local regulations regarding animal health, care, and safety.

Standards of Behavior by Animal and Owner

Health, safety, and behavioral standards must be maintained at all times:

- Animals require daily food, water, attention, and routine health checks.
- Animals must not be left unattended overnight at any time. Students who leave campus overnight must take their ESA with them or arrange off-campus care.
- ESAs are permitted only within the student's assigned residence and may not enter classrooms, offices, administrative spaces, or public common areas.
- Animal waste must be cleaned promptly and disposed of properly in exterior dumpsters. Waste may not be disposed of in campus trash bins or plumbing systems.
- Cats must have litter boxes cleaned and changed regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Any accidents inside the residence must be cleaned immediately using appropriate cleaning products.
- Residents must maintain sanitary conditions to prevent odor, pests, and health hazards.
- Flea or pest infestations must be addressed promptly at the owner's expense.
- Animals must not disrupt others through noise, odor, or aggressive behavior.
- The owner assumes all liability for damages or injuries caused by their animal.

Cleaning and Damages

At the end of the housing contract, or when the student no longer owns the animal, Campus Housing will inspect the living space to assess cleanliness and any damage attributed to the ESA. Students are responsible for restoring their residence to its original condition. This includes carpet cleaning, odor removal, and repair or replacement of damaged items. Any associated cleaning or repair costs will be billed to the student's account.

Removal of Animals and Violations

MCC reserves the right to require the removal of an ESA if:

- The animal poses a threat to the health, safety, or property of others.
- The student fails to meet the responsibilities outlined in this policy.
- The animal's presence results in substantial disruption or damage.

Students will receive written notice if an ESA must be removed. Continued noncompliance may result in disciplinary action and/or termination of the housing agreement.

Contact Information

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