

PARTY ANIMALS?

Discussing emotional support animal policies and assessment

Joanna Timmerman, MA (she/her)
Assistant Director of Disability and Access

WHO AM I?

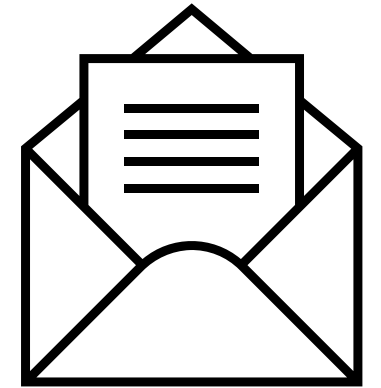
- New disability professional
- My support animal, Maxie
- Implementing social model of disability



WHAT'S THE IMPACT OF AN ESA?

Hi Joanna,

We spoke a while back about one of my therapy clients having an ESA on campus...But, I just wanted to send a quick note to say how incredibly helpful this has been this semester. I think it's amazing that this is an option for students! Thank you for facilitating this!



WHAT DO WE ALREADY KNOW?

Service Animal

- Task-trained
- Legally protected public access

Support Animal

- Comfort to handler
- Legally protected housing with documentation

Therapy Animal

- Comfort to community
- Must be invited to space

WHAT DO WE ALREADY KNOW?

- Rise in documented mental health impacts in college-aged adults
- Requests for support animals – on the rise? Setting a bad precedent? Too labor and facility intensive?
- Why not just therapy animals? Routine & personal experiences

A PERSPECTIVE OF STUDENT CARE

- Understanding ESAs with body-like rights (e.g., prosthetic)
 - Functional
 - Phenomenological
 - Therapeutic
 - Handler experiences (proprioception)

HOW DO WE ACCOMMODATE?

- The Ursinus College policy:
 1. Request form (emergency contact, animal description, etc.)
 2. Veterinarian form
 3. Mental health professional form
 4. Interactive process meeting

HOW DO WE ACCOMMODATE?

- Housing: animal must be reasonable size and temperament for college living
- Academics: animal is not allowed in other campus buildings
 - What will we do as those requests increase?
- Fears/allergies: must reach a functional level; right now, we are easily able to make living modifications
- Requirement for students to have an "established relationship" with the animal

HOW DO WE ACCOMMODATE?

- What are reasonable alternative accommodations?
- How can we be proactive about student care and needs?

HOW DO WE EVALUATE?

- Key performance indicators: GPA, sense of belonging, academic alerts, conduct cases, number of requests
- Observations from disability staff, observations from external parties, feedback from the student
- How can we further research and assessment without placing the burden on the student?

HOW CAN WE REDUCE BARRIERS?

- Campus education
 - Service versus support animals
 - Benefits of animals – therapy dog program
 - Having a pet 101
 - Reviewing the ESA process
- Documentation guidelines
 - Flexibility with the tertiary documentation *for the student* (e.g., who fills out the form)

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- Foster, H.A., Robinson, C.L., Thomas, J.W., & Knight-Crenshaw, L (2020). Emotional Support Animals: How to accommodate all students. *Journal of Cases in Education Leadership*.
- Kirnan, J.P. et al. (2022). Emotional support animals supporting college students' mental health and well-being: A qualitative analysis exploring practices, policies, and perceptions. *Journal of American College Health*.
- Lanning, B.A., Patterson, M.S., Henry, S., Graves-Bowsell, C.T., Summerall, B., & Millan, C. (2022). Assessment of university policies for service animals and emotional support animals. *Journal of American College Health*.
- Phillips, M. (2016). Service and emotional support animals on campus: the relevance and controversy. *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education*.
- Younggren, J. N. et al (2019). Emotional support animal assessments: Toward a standard and comprehensive model for mental health professionals. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*.
- Kolmes, S (2020). Are emotional support animals prosthetics or pets? Body-like rights to emotional support animals. *Journal of Medical Ethics*.