



# Support or Emotional Support Animal (“ESA”) Request Form

Mercyhurst University provides reasonable accommodations for a student with a disability who has a verifiable need of having a Support Animal, including an Emotional Support Animal (ESA), in university housing. A reasonable accommodation is an exception to the University’s rules, policies, practices, or services that a student with a disability may need to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy University housing.

This form is to request a Support Animal or ESA, and NOT a Service Animal.

## What is the difference?

- **Service Animals** are defined as dogs, and in rare instances miniature horses, that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. These tasks can include things like pulling a wheelchair, guiding a person who is visually impaired, or alerting a person who is having a seizure. The tasks a service dog can perform are not limited to this list. However, the work or task a service dog does must be directly related to the person's disability. Service Animals may accompany persons with disabilities into places that the public normally goes. Students with questions about Service Animals should contact the ADA/504 Coordinator by email [ADA@mercyhurst.edu](mailto:ADA@mercyhurst.edu) or phone 814-824-2362.
- A **Support Animal** is an assistance animal, other than a service animal, that does work, performs tasks, provides assistance, and/or provides therapeutic emotional support people with disabilities. An **Emotional Support Animal (ESA)** is a type of Support Animal. An ESA provides emotional support and comfort to individuals with psychiatric disabilities and other mental health issues. A Support Animal, including an ESA, is typically a dog, cat, small bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, other rodent, fish, or other small, domesticated animal. A Support Animal or ESA need not be trained to perform tasks for a person with a disability. The term **ESA** will be used throughout the remainder of this document.

To request an ESA in Mercyhurst University Housing, the first step is to complete the [Online Accommodations Request Application](#). Next, a health care provider (e.g., physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, physician’s assistant, nurse practitioner, nurse, clinical licensed social worker, etc.) or a third party who has personal knowledge of the student’s disability (as described by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) and is determined by the ADA/504 Coordinator in good faith to be reliable should complete the Student Health Care Section (p. 3) and the Health Care/Third Party Information Section (p. 4) of this form.

Some websites sell certificates, registrations, and licensing documents for ESAs to anyone who answers certain questions or participates in a short interview and pays a fee. Such documentation from the internet is not, by itself, sufficient to reliably establish that an individual has a non-observable disability or disability-related need for an ESA. By contrast, the university will consider as reliable documentation from a health care professional that confirms a person’s disability and/or need for an ESA when the provider has personal knowledge of the individual.

## The information completed on this form will be reviewed to determine:

1. That the student is a person with a documented disability;
2. That the ESA being requested is necessary to afford the student, as a person with a disability, an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the on-campus housing facilities;
3. That there is an identifiable relationship between the disability and the support that the ESA provides.

This form is offered as a guide. The ADA/504 Coordinator will review documentation in any format submitted. To the extent this information has already been submitted to the ADA/504 Coordinator in another format, the University will not require re-submission.

The university will use good faith efforts to notify the student of its final determination in writing within ten (10) business days of receipt of documentation from the health care provider or third party with personal knowledge of the student's disability (as described by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) who the ADA/504 Coordinator has determined in good faith to be reliable.

If the university determines that a student is not eligible for an ESA, or the specific ESA requested, the university will provide the student written notification of the denial and the reasons for the denial. The university will provide written notification of the appeal procedures that the student may use to challenge a denial.

A student who is approved to have an ESA in Mercyhurst University housing will be required to acknowledge and comply with the ESA Owner's Rights and Responsibilities, as outlined below. These rights and responsibilities will be reviewed with the student by the ADA/504 Coordinator.

## Student Information – to be completed by the student:

Student Name:

Mercyhurst ID:

Cell Phone:

Mercyhurst Email:

Type of Animal Requested (e.g., dog, cat, rabbit, etc.):

I have read this document and understand the conditions outlined.

Student Signature:

Date:

**Student Health Care Section** – to be completed by a health care provider or third party with personal knowledge of student’s disability:

To properly evaluate how the Mercyhurst University can best meet the student’s need for **requesting a Support Animal or Emotional Support Animal (ESA) in university housing**, the university requires information from a health care provider or reliable third party who has personal knowledge of the student’s disability (as described by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), including the use of a Support Animal to address limitations that result from such disability.

**Specifically, the information provided on this form will be reviewed to determine whether:**

1. The student is a person with a documented disability.
2. The Support Animal or ESA being requested is necessary to afford the student, as a person with a disability, an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the on-campus housing facilities.
3. There is an identifiable relationship between the disability and the support that the Support Animal or ESA provides.

**Please respond to all questions below and attach additional related information as appropriate.**

1. **Does the student have a disability, a.k.a. a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities?** *Examples of major life activities include impairments to seeing, hearing, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, caring for oneself, learning, speaking, working, and other impairments that may substantially limit at least one major life activity or bodily function.*

NO.

YES. Describe which major life activities or bodily functions are impaired:

2. **Does the student need the Support Animal or Emotional Support Animal because the animal does work, performs tasks, provides assistance, and/or provides therapeutic emotional support related to the student’s disability?**

NO.

YES. Describe how the Support Animal or Emotional Support Animal does work, performs tasks, provides assistance, or provides therapeutic emotional support that reduces the symptoms and/or effects of the student’s disability:

Health Care Provider/Third Party Information Section – to be completed by a health care provider or reliable third party with personal knowledge of the student’s disability:

I verify that the named student information is correct, and that I have personal knowledge of this student (i.e., knowledge used to diagnose, advise, counsel, treat or provide health care or other disability-related services to a patient/client).

Provider Name:

Provider Qualifications (License Number, Certification, Degree, if applicable):

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Signature:

Date:

## ESA Owner Rights and Responsibilities - to be read and signed by the student:

A student who is eligible for a Support or Emotional Support Animal ("ESA") will be required to meet with the ADA/504 Coordinator to review and agree to the following requirements. Failure to follow these requirements may result in the university requesting the removal of the ESA from university housing.

An ESA must be contained within the privately assigned student housing (room, suite, or apartment), except to the extent the student is taking the animal outside for natural relief. When an ESA is outside of the student's privately assigned housing, the animal must be either controlled by a leash or harness or contained in an appropriate animal carrier. An ESA is not permitted in any other indoor or non-public outdoor areas of the university without prior approval through the reasonable accommodation process administered through the ADA/504 Coordinator as outlined in the [Mercyhurst Accommodations Policy](#).

### Student Responsibilities as the Animal Owner:

1. Prior to each new academic year, the student must notify the ADA/504 Coordinator of their intent to return with their ESA and submit updated documentation to provide continued eligibility for the requested accommodation.
  - a. The student must submit an updated Veterinarian Verification Form annually to confirm the ESA complies with all Pennsylvania and local animal ordinances. This includes verification that the ESA has received all vaccinations, is free from communicable diseases, and is in general good health.
  - b. The student must provide alternate/emergency caregiver contact information and update annually.
2. Dogs must be properly licensed in the City of Erie annually. For more information, contact the ADA/504 Coordinator or visit the City of Erie website <http://www.erie.pa.us/residents/services/dog-licenses/>.
3. Dogs and cats approved as ESAs must always wear basic identification tags - rabies tag, basic ID tag, or dog license tag.
4. The ESA must be under the control of the student, such as on a leash or in a carrier, whenever the assistance animal is not in the student's assigned university housing unit. The student is always responsible for the actions of their ESA. The ESA is only authorized to be present in the specific university housing unit in which the disabled student resides.
5. The ESA must be in an appropriate kennel, carrier, or otherwise safely contained within the university housing unit whenever the student is away from the housing unit for classes, meals, meetings, practices, rehearsals, etc.
6. The ESA may not be left alone overnight in university housing or to be cared for by another student. The ESA may not be housed in another student's assigned university housing unit. If the student is to be gone overnight or for a prolonged period, the ESA must accompany the student.
7. The student must demonstrate proper care of the animal and ensure its health, safety, and welfare.
8. ESAs must be housebroken. The student is responsible for cleaning up all animal waste (both indoors and outdoors) in a timely and effective fashion. An animal that is not housebroken may not be eligible to serve as an ESA. Additionally, the student shall be fully and solely responsible for disposal of animal waste. Failure to properly dispose of animal waste will result in a charge of violating university housing policies.

Continued violations may result in revocation of the student's ESA registration and authority to keep the ESA in university housing.

9. The student is responsible for the appropriate management of the ESA. An ESA must be reasonably well-behaved; this includes no excessive or unreasonable barking, whining, scratching, chewing, or aggression as this type of behavior is likely to impact the ability of other students to use and enjoy their university housing. If the ESA is in common areas, such as study rooms or living rooms, the student must make reasonable effort to ensure the presence of the ESA is not disrupting the enjoyment or use of other students of their mutual living space. If conflict arises between the student with the assistance animal and other students, Mercyhurst University Residence Life Staff will work with all parties to attempt to find a reasonable solution to the problem. Continued violations may result in revocation the student's ESA registration and authority to keep the ESA in university housing.
10. The student is financially responsible for any and all actions of the animal, including but not limited to, bodily injury or property damage, such as furniture or floor coverings replacement. The student may be charged for any damage caused by the ESA that is beyond reasonable wear and tear.
11. The student's university housing unit must be kept clean with no odors from the ESA. The student's university housing unit may be inspected for fleas, ticks, or other pests if necessary. If fleas, ticks, or other pests are detected through inspection, the housing assignment will be treated using approved fumigation methods by a university-approved pest control service. The student will be billed for the expense of any pest treatment above and beyond standard pest management in university housing. The university shall have the right to bill the student's account for unmet obligations under this provision.
12. If Mercyhurst University receives a report or complaint that an ESA is interfering with the reasonable enjoyment of other students sharing the dwelling (i.e., allergies, phobias, religious preference, and need for quiet, etc.), Mercyhurst University Residence Life Staff will work with all parties to attempt to find a reasonable solution to the problem.
13. ESAs are not permitted in any other student's private area (i.e., the room in which they sleep) without the express invitation of that student.
14. The ESA is permitted in university housing only as long as it is necessary due to the student's disability. The student must notify the university, in writing, if the animal is no longer needed or is no longer in residence. To replace an animal, the student must submit a new request to demonstrate that the new animal is necessary due to the student's disability.

### **Student Rights as the Animal Owner:**

1. The university may not ask for or require a student with a disability to pay a surcharge or comply with other requirements generally not applicable to students without animals.
2. A student with a disability may submit a request for an ESA in university housing at any time. The university must consider this request, even if the school year is already in session and/or the student has already brought the animal into university housing.
3. The student is not required to equip a Service Animal or Support Animal with a vest or other item identifying it as such.
4. While the interactive process is necessarily an open exchange of information, the university may not require the student to disclose details about their diagnosis, the severity of their disability, or medical records. The university may not require a medical examination.

5. The university may not insist on specific types of evidence if the information provided to the university meets the requirements outlined in the Support or Emotional Support Animals in Mercyhurst University Housing policy.
6. In the event the university determines that the information provided to the university is insufficient to confirm a student’s disability or disability-related need for an ESA, the university will provide the student with an opportunity to continue the interactive process, including a discussion of the reasons for the denial, alternative accommodations, and/or allowing the student to supplement the information provided.
7. The university will not deny a reasonable request for an ESA because the request would impose a fundamental alteration to the nature of the university’s operations or impose an undue financial and administrative burden on the university, without first engaging in an interactive process with the student to discuss whether an alternative accommodation may be effective in meeting the student’s disability-related needs.
8. In the event the university determines that a student is not eligible or is no longer eligible for an ESA, or the specific ESA requested, the university will provide the student written notification of the reasons for this denial. The university will also provide written notification of the appeal or grievance procedures that the student may use to challenge this denial.

*I understand my rights and responsibilities as an ESA owner.  
I understand that failure to meet my responsibilities may result in the revocation of my ESA’s registration,  
my authority to keep the ESA in university housing, and possible violation of the Student Conduct Code.*

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ESA Owner Signature

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Date

Mercyhurst ADA/504 Coordinator:

Susan Reddinger  
Old Main Room 301  
[ADA@mercyhurst.edu](mailto:ADA@mercyhurst.edu)  
Desk: 814-824-2362  
FAX: 814-824-2020

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