

## Documentation Guidelines for Emotional Support Animals

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the University of your disability. Accommodations are provided in accordance with the ADA. When you register for services, **please upload a current psychological evaluation and/or any testing that was done, a letter from your psychiatrist, an IEP/504 and a copy of any accommodations on the SAT/ACT to determine a diagnosis that supports the functional impact of the disorder.**

Please provide your psychiatrist with the following documentation guidelines.

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### Reason for Letter

A patient of yours is enrolled at Georgia College & State University and living on campus. They are reporting to the Student Disability Resource Center that they meet the definition of disability under criteria of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). They have reported that you are their provider currently treating them for this disability. Please read the important terms and definitions and then write a letter based on the terms and definitions and your clinical judgment.

### Important Terms and Definitions

Emotional Support Animals (ESA) are not covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). They are covered under the Fair Housing Act (FHA). ESAs are not considered Service Animals, and **DO NOT** have public access rights. These animals provide companionship and are used to aid with certain diagnoses, such as anxiety, depression, etc. They are not trained to perform specific tasks to mitigate a disability. ESAs must be housebroken and *must aid in decreasing the impairments of a disability on everyday functioning*. A disability is defined, per ADA, as: “*a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or a record of such an impairment.*” Please note, by signing your letter you are stating that the **individual’s diagnosis matches the ADA definition of disability**—the diagnosis is disabling enough that the individual needs the presence of the animal to function in everyday life activities (activities of daily living, academic, occupational, etc.).

Please write your supporting letter on letterhead, date the letter, sign it and address all of the following:

- The student's name, birth date and animal type
- The evaluator’s name, title and license number
- Primary and secondary diagnosis (if applicable) and date of diagnosis(es)
- DSM/ICD Code for each diagnosis
- A clear diagnostic statement that includes evidence of an existing impairment, history, current symptoms and severity of the disorder
- Provide the diagnostic criteria and methodology used to diagnose the condition/s
- How long have you been working with this student regarding this/these diagnosis/diagnoses?
- Does this student require ongoing treatment?
- In your clinical opinion, is this an animal that you would prescribe as part of the treatment process for this disability?
- Please report the symptoms that this animal relieves for this student.
- What negative impacts would occur if this housing accommodation were not approved? How would this individual’s disability be impacted?