

ESA Resource Information

Letter for TMH Behavioral Health Center

<http://servicedogcentral.org/content/node/73>

Paul,

Emotional Support Animals are a hot button as of late. Basically, an emotional support animal is **not a pet**. An emotional support animal is a companion animal that provides therapeutic benefit to an individual with a mental or psychiatric disability. The person seeking the emotional support animal must have a **verifiable disability** (the reason cannot just be a need for companionship). The animal is viewed as a "reasonable accommodation" under the Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 (FHA or FHAct) to those housing communities that have a "no pets" rule. In other words, just as a wheelchair provides a person with a physical limitation the equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling, an emotional support animal provides a person with a mental or psychiatric disability the same opportunity to live independently. Most times, an emotional support animal will be seen as a reasonable accommodation for a person with such a disability. Failure to make reasonable accommodations by changing rules or policies can be a violation of the FHA unless the accommodation would be an undue financial burden on the landlord or cause a fundamental alteration to the premises.

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses the term "assistance animal" to cover any 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 identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability. ([FHEO Notice: FHEO-2013-01](#) at page 2). An emotional support animal is one type of assistance animal allowed as a reasonable accommodation to a residence with a "no pets" rule.

<https://www.animallaw.info/article/faqs-emotional-support-animals>

Some airlines allow those with ESAs to fly with them but this is really up to the airline.

Best,

Stephanie Perkins

Program Director

Animal Therapy

Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare