

Lycoming College
Emotional Support Animal Policy

Lycoming College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities who require the assistance of an emotional support animal (ESA). Currently and for many years, the College has a housing policy that prohibits pets in College housing. However, the College is obligated to provide reasonable accommodations to students with respect to ESAs when the use of said animal is necessary to afford students with equal opportunities to use and enjoy College housing.

In order to qualify for an accommodation, a student must have a documented disorder that rises to the level of a disability. The student must also document how the animal is necessary in order to afford the student an equal opportunity to use and enjoy their dwelling. This documentation must articulate a clear nexus between the disability and the assistance the animal provides.

Emotional Support Animal

An ESA is an animal which provides emotional support to a person with a disability to ease one or more identified symptoms or effects of such person's disability, upon recommendation of a healthcare or mental health professional.

ESAs are not service animals. ESAs are not trained to perform work or tasks and do not assist a person with a disability with daily living activities nor do ESAs accompany the person with the disability at all times. Also unlike service animals, an ESA includes species other than dogs.

ESAs are not allowed to accompany persons with disabilities in all areas of the Lycoming College campus, but rather, are required to reside in the campus affiliated residential housing, in accordance with this policy.

Process and Procedures to Request the ESA

Before an ESA can be brought into College housing, the individual with the disability must follow the procedures set forth in this policy, including receiving approval by the Housing Accommodation Committee. Since housing options may be limited, students should give the College as much advance notice as is possible to ensure a smooth transition.

Like all disability accommodations, the determination of whether or not an ESA is a reasonable accommodation is made on a case-by-case basis through an interactive process between the student and the College.

ESA Request Form

Students requesting an ESA must complete the College's ESA Housing Accommodation Request Form, which can be found in the Office of Residential Life. The form must be completed by both the student and an independent healthcare professional not employed by the College, and then returned to the Office of Residential Life directly from the healthcare provider.

Pursuant to College policy and to avoid conflicts of interest, healthcare professionals employed by the College or employees of the College who serve on the Housing Accommodation Committee are not permitted to provide supporting documentation.

Housing Accommodation Committee Review Process

The Housing Accommodation Committee will evaluate the student's documentation and issue a decision regarding the ESA, normally within 30 days of receipt of fully completed documentation. The Committee has the right to request additional information, request a meeting with the student, and/or recommend alternative accommodations. The Chair of the Housing Accommodation Committee will notify the student regarding approval or denial of the ESA request via email.

After the request has been approved and prior to the animal's arrival on campus, the student must meet with the Chair of the Housing Accommodation Committee to ensure they understand this policy and their responsibilities, to discuss housing options based on the documented needs of the student and any housing accommodations approved through the approval process, and to provide veterinary documentation for the ESA (see Other ESA Documentation).

Other ESA Documentation

Students requesting an ESA in campus housing must provide documentation from a professional veterinarian certifying that the ESA is in good health and current on all applicable state and local vaccinations. The student must provide proof that all licenses required under applicable law are current. This documentation must be provided to the Chair of the Housing Accommodation Committee prior to the animal arriving on campus.

Denials of ESA Requests

Lycoming College is not required to provide accommodations that would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others. The College will also deny requests that would result in substantial physical damage to the property of others, pose an undue financial and administrative burden on the College, or fundamentally alter the nature of the College's residential life operations. Lycoming College will not approve any ESA unless it is permitted in residential housing by state and local laws and is in conformity with these laws.

Reapplications

The ESA approval is specific to the animal for which the accommodation request is made and is limited to the academic year in which the approval is given. The student must request the accommodation and follow the procedures set forth above for each academic year. To replace one ESA with another ESA, the student must reapply for the accommodation following the steps set forth above.

Responsibilities of the Student with the ESA

1. The care and supervision of the ESA is solely the responsibility of the student (including, but not limited to, regular feeding, bathing, grooming, daily care, and veterinary services). The College is not responsible for the animal's care or supervision. The student is responsible to ensure the ESA is housebroken or litter trained, in good health, clean, free of fleas and ticks, does not create safety hazards for other people, and is at all times in compliance with all state and local laws and requirements associated with licensing, vaccinations, and other health regulations.
2. An ESA must be taken out of the building by way of the shortest and most direct path and must be maintained under standard restraints such as a carrier or collar/harness and leash when outdoors, in public areas, or in transit and must be confined to the residence when not in transit.

3. The student is responsible to clean up after and properly dispose of their ESA's feces while on campus. Litter boxes should be placed on student-provided mats on tiled or vinyl floors so that feces and urine are not tracked onto carpeted surfaces. The student is responsible for properly containing and regularly disposing of all animal waste in designated outside trash dumpsters. Dog feces must be immediately removed, placed in a plastic bag, securely tied and disposed of in an outside dumpster. The owner is to arrange for immediate removal of animal waste if unable to perform the task personally.
4. When the approved student leaves their residence for any length of time, the ESA must be housed in a crate, carrier, kennel, or other appropriate enclosure.
5. Lycoming College staff are not responsible for the retrieval of the ESA in the event the animal escapes or becomes lost.
6. The student residence may be inspected by College personnel for fleas, ticks, other pests and/or damage as needed. If fleas, ticks or other pests are detected through inspection, the residence will be treated using approved fumigation methods by a college-approved pest control service. The student will be billed for the expense of any pest control treatment. If the problem reoccurs, the student's approval to have an ESA may be terminated or the student may be required to show proof of monthly flea and tick preventative treatment.
7. The student must abide by all other residential policies. An exception to the pet policy does not constitute an exception to any other Lycoming College policy. Students with an ESA must comply with the same rules regarding noise, safety, disruption, and cleanliness as students without disabilities.
8. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the ESA does not interfere with the normal activities of the residents or negatively impact the students who reside in the residence.
9. The student is solely responsible for any property damage or bodily injury caused by the ESA.
10. The student must indemnify and hold the College and College personnel harmless of and from any and all claims, liabilities, and damages arising out of or relating to the ESA or its presence in College housing or any violation of this policy and rules relating to the responsibilities of the student for the ESA.
11. The student is responsible to keep the ESA under control and to take effective action when it may become out of control.
12. The student must notify the Chair of the Housing Accommodation Committee in writing if the animal is no longer needed as an ESA or is no longer in residence.

Animal Supervision and Plan for Designated School Breaks

The approved student is the sole caretaker of the ESA at all times. It is expected that the ESA will remain with the student over scheduled school breaks, whether the student chooses to leave campus or remain on campus during those time periods.

In the event of an emergency (i.e. an unanticipated life event), the student should identify an alternate caretaker who agrees to care for the ESA during that time period (i.e. situations expected to last 2-3 days).

At any time that alternate care is provided the student must file the caretaker's name and contact information with Chair of the Housing Accommodation Committee who will coordinate with the Office of Safety and Security to unlock the residence as needed. Failure to arrange an alternate caretaker may result in the College arranging for the animal to be boarded at the owner's expense.

Campus Access and Restricted Areas

Lycoming College allows ESAs only in residential facilities. An ESA must be contained within the ESA owner's private residential area (individual room or apartment) at all times, except when outdoor toileting (if applicable) or transporting outside the student's residential area to leave the building using a carrier or collar/harness and leash. The ESA cannot be taken into other students' private rooms or apartments and is not permitted in the common areas of the residential facilities including lounges, bathrooms, laundry facilities, etc. or in other public areas of Lycoming College such as classrooms, academic buildings, administrative buildings, libraries, dining services areas, fitness center, etc.

When an Accommodation May be Revoked

Lycoming College may consider revoking the accommodation and require the student to remove an ESA from campus immediately for any of the following reasons:

1. If the ESA poses a threat to the health or safety of others on campus, is unruly or disruptive, or is dangerous or out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it.
2. If the ESA disrupts the educational environment of Lycoming College and/or the residential community.
3. If the individual fails to remove the ESA by the deadline specified after an incident.
4. If the student violates any of the requirements or responsibilities in this policy.

Lycoming College has the right to immediately correct potentially harmful situations, including entry into the student's private residential area and removal of an ESA. Lycoming College retains the right to remove and board the animal at the owner's expense. Should the animal be removed from the premises for any reason, the student is expected to fulfill their housing obligations for the remainder of the housing contract.