

**Procedural Guidelines and Agreement
for Maintaining an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) for Residents at the
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Effective for the 2025-2026 Academic Year**

I. Introduction

The University of Maryland, Baltimore County (“UMBC”) is committed to providing residents with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy University housing through allowing for an Emotional Support Animal. The following guidelines explain the specific requirements applicable to all current and future residents seeking use of an Emotional Support Animal as a housing accommodation in a UMBC residence hall, apartment, or Walker Avenue Apartment (“UMBC Housing”). UMBC reserves the right to amend these guidelines as circumstances require.

II. Definitions

An **Emotional Support Animal (ESA)**, also referred to as a Comfort or Therapy Animal, is a companion animal that provides emotional support to persons with a disability who have a documented need for such support as determined and prescribed by an appropriately qualified mental health professional. The ESA must be documented as necessary for an individual with a disability by an appropriately qualified and relevant mental health professional with whom the individual has an established relationship.

An ESA is not a Service Animal (dog) under the ADA. Unlike a Service Animal (dog), an ESA does not assist a person with a disability with activities of daily living, does not need to be trained to provide a specific work task, nor does it accompany a person with a disability at all times. An ESA is not considered a pet. Under HUD, an ESA may be identified as a common household small, domesticated animal that is traditionally kept in the home for emotional enjoyment.

A “**Resident Partner**” as referenced in these guidelines refers to the individual who benefits from the ESA’s use.

The **Office of Student Disability Services (SDS)** as referenced in these guidelines refers to the office that collaborates with students, faculty, and staff to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to all UMBC programs and activities.

The **Office of Residential Life (Residential Life)** as referenced in these guidelines refers to the office that provides facilities, services, and programs that support the academic mission of the institution and enhance the quality of life for residents that live on campus.

III. **Process for UMBC Students Requesting an ESA Accommodation**

Although it is the policy of UMBC that students are generally prohibited from having animals of any type in UMBC Housing, UMBC will consider a request by a student with a disability for a reasonable accommodation to allow an ESA that is reasonable and necessary because of a documented disability. However, no ESA may be kept in UMBC Housing at any time prior to the student receiving approval as a reasonable accommodation consistent with these guidelines.

Students with documented disabilities that would like to request a housing accommodation based on a disability/disabling condition will need to [register](#) with SDS through the online student portal *Accommodate* ([via the online SDS Registration Form](#)). Students will provide documentation of their disability and discuss their disability limitations that may necessitate having an ESA in their residence with SDS staff. SDS will review and maintain the student's confidential disability documentation. SDS is responsible for evaluating requests for reasonable accommodation based on disability in UMBC Housing.

In evaluating the request, SDS will consult with Residential Life and the UMBC ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, as necessary, to determine whether the requested accommodation is reasonable and appropriate.

Students should also note their housing accommodation requests on the housing application submitted to Residential Life.

For all requests for an ESA, SDS will consult with Residential Life in making a case-by-case determination of whether the presence of an ESA is reasonable and appropriate.

A request for an ESA accommodation may be denied if the presence of the ESA:

- a. Imposes an undue financial and/or administrative burden on the University;
- b. Fundamentally alters Residential Life Housing policies; and/or
- c. Poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others or would cause substantial property damage to the property of others, including UMBC property.

Students must receive approval for an ESA as an accommodation for a disability in UMBC Housing via an official SDS letter of accommodation **and** must receive official written permission from Residential Life **prior** to bringing their animal on UMBC property.

IV. **Procedures for Registering an ESA with Residential Life**

Residents should begin the Residential Life registration process at least two (2) weeks before housing selection or the housing licensing deadline. Residents should plan ahead

to start and conclude the SDS process prior to beginning the Residential Life registration process since the Residential Life registration process requires SDS approval.

If the need for the ESA arises after the resident is already placed in housing for the year, the resident should provide the information at least thirty (30) days prior to the date the resident would like to bring the ESA to the UMBC Housing.

Residents making requests after housing has already been assigned should note that if the ESA is approved, Residential Life will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the request on a prompt basis.

The resident must complete the following Residential Life registration steps before the ESA may be permitted to be brought into UMBC Housing:

- a. Meet with a Residential Life representative for an intake meeting and to review *Procedural Guidelines and Agreement for Maintaining an Emotional Support Animal for Residents*;
- b. Submit all required animal documentation to Residential Life; and
- c. Receive a formal written permission letter from Residential Life.

Residents who are found on-campus in possession of an animal without receiving formal written permission from Residential Life will be asked to remove the unapproved animals immediately and may be subject to conduct action.

V. General Criteria for Determining the Exclusion, Denial, and/or Removal of an ESA by Residential Life

UMBC Housing is unique in several aspects including the mandatory assignment of roommates for many individuals and the mandate that individuals must share a room or suite in certain residence halls.

To ensure that the presence of an ESA is not an undue administrative burden or fundamental alteration of Residential Life programs, a Resident Partner's request for a specific animal may not be permitted by Residential Life.

The questions in determining if an ESA will be allowed in UMBC Housing are whether (1) the ESA is necessary to afford the resident an equal opportunity to use and enjoy UMBC Housing due to the limitations of a resident disability and (2) whether the ESA's presence in UMBC Housing is reasonable.

The following factors, among others, may be considered, as evidence in determining whether the presence of the ESA is not reasonable or in the making of housing assignments for residents with an ESA:

- a. The ESA's vaccinations are not up-to-date;

- b. The ESA is not housebroken or is unable to live with others in a reasonable manner;
- c. The ESA's presence would force another individual from housing (e.g., serious allergies);
- d. The space needed for the cage/crate in which the ESA will be housed is too large for available assigned housing space;
- e. The ESA poses health risks from zoonotic diseases or safety concerns regarding containment that cannot be sufficiently mitigated for inclusion in the communal living setting;
- f. The ESA poses or has posed in the past a direct threat to the individual or others (such as aggressive behavior towards or injuring the individual or others);
- g. The ESA causes or has caused excessive damage to housing beyond reasonable wear and tear; or
- h. The ESA's presence otherwise violates individuals' right to peace and quiet enjoyment of their residence.

Dangerous, venomous, unvaccinated, unregistered, unlicensed, illegal animals, and/or animals that pose a health risk to the community, such as those known to carry zoonotic diseases, are not permitted. Nationally, there have been salmonella outbreaks attributed to pet hedgehogs, bearded dragons, and turtles obtained through pet stores. Hospitalizations, and in rare instances, death has resulted. At this time, UMBC reserves the right to deny these species from UMBC Housing to protect the safety of our residents in the residential community.

If the Resident Partner is permitted to have a registered ESA in University Housing, Residential Life reserves the right to request the animal's removal for the following reasons:

- a. The ESA is reported to have posed a direct threat to the Resident Partner or others (such as aggressive behavior towards or injuring the individual or others);
- b. The ESA is reported to have continuously caused disruptions, including noise, for residents, Residential Life staff, and/or other UMBC community members; or
- c. The Resident Partner's conduct regarding the ESA suggests neglect, poor treatment, or is otherwise out of compliance with the *Procedural Guidelines and Agreement for Maintaining an Emotional Support Animal for Residents at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County*.

If the Resident Partner is unable to remove the ESA from UMBC property, Residential Life will reach out to the Resident Partner's emergency contact. If emergency contacts cannot be reached to retrieve the ESA, then Animal Control will be contacted to remove the ESA from UMBC property, at the Resident Partner's expense.

An ill ESA may be removed from UMBC Housing or UMBC property, upon notice to its Resident Partner, as applicable.

Resident Partners whose requested animal is denied permission by Residential Life or whose ESA is removed by UMBC officials are eligible to submit documentation to register a different animal with Residential Life (see Section IV), if SDS approval is received prior.

Similarly, if the Resident Partner would like to bring a different animal to UMBC Housing, they must go through the Residential Life registration process again (see Section IV) after they have received approval from SDS. If a subsequent request is made and approved, then the original request and permission will be invalidated.

The ESA is allowed in University Housing only if it is necessary because of the Resident Partner's disability. Should the Resident Partner no longer need their ESA in UMBC Housing, they should notify Residential Life and SDS in writing immediately.

Resident Partners choosing to voluntarily remove their ESA from UMBC Housing will maintain their SDS accommodation approval, as well as their Residential Life permission for the remainder of that academic year.

Should the ESA be removed from UMBC Housing or UMBC property for any reason, the Resident Partner is expected to fulfill their housing obligations for the remainder of the Residential Life housing license.

VI. Notice to Residential Community

Once the ESA is permitted to reside on campus, Residential Life personnel will, when appropriate, notify residents of the shared space (room, suite, or apartment) and Residential Life Staff by electronic carbon copy on the approval notice. The notification will establish the presence of the ESA and instructions related to the ESA.

In addition to written notification, Residential Life Staff will have access to view the registration documentation (Section VII) for the approved/registered animal in the housing database system.

A person who expects to come into contact with the permitted animal frequently, and who has medical condition(s) that are affected by animals, is asked to contact the Office of Student Disability Services if they have a qualifying disabling condition that prevents them from being able to live with an ESA, such as documented allergic reactions or mental health diagnosis related to the presence of animals. The Office of Student Disability Services will meet with the concerned student to determine the presence of a disability and whether there is a need for accommodation. Any change in housing assignment that is necessary due to disability will be coordinated in conjunction with

SDS, Residential Life, and the impacted residents(s) and is subject to space availability.

Residential Life will resolve any non-medical conflict in a timely manner. Staff members will consider the conflicting needs and/or accommodations of all persons involved. If reassignment of a resident is the only solution, the resident with the oldest approved accommodation may not be relocated.

VII. Required Registration Documentation & Animal Records

- a. An ESA may not reside in UMBC Housing until the resident has (1) received approval for an ESA as an accommodation for a disability in UMBC Housing via an official SDS letter of accommodation, (2) submitted all required Residential Life documentation and (3) received formal written permission from Residential Life.
- b. The Resident Partner must abide by current city, county, and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to licensing, vaccination, and other requirements for animals. It is the Resident Partner's responsibility to know and understand these ordinances, laws, and regulations.
- c. The Resident Partner must provide Residential Life with a signed *Procedural Guidelines and Agreement for Maintaining an Emotional Support Animal for Residents at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County*, a completed *UMBC Office of Residential Life ESA Registration Form*, a copy of the Baltimore County Registration (as applicable), colored photo of their animal, and *Veterinarian's Verification* that the ESA has all veterinary-recommended vaccinations and that those vaccinations have been fully administered and activated to maintain the ESA's health and prevent contagious disease. The ESA must have all veterinarian-recommended vaccinations to maintain the ESA's health and prevent contagious diseases. Resident Partners are required to submit documentation of vaccinations prior to their move-in day for the Fall semester and/or Spring semester(s) as part of the housing license process and with each annual review.
- d. The ESA is required to be licensed in compliance with Maryland and Baltimore County laws.
- e. All dogs and cats that are four months of age or older and kept in Baltimore County for longer than 30 days per year must be licensed annually. The owner must provide proof of a current rabies vaccination when applying for the license. Licensing is processed through their [Department of Permits, Approvals & Inspections](#).
- f. UMBC reserves the right to request an updated verification at any time during the ESA's residency. To ensure residential community health and safety, the ESA will not be allowed to live in UMBC Housing until the appropriate vaccine cycles have fully been administered and activated, including rabies (for cats and dogs). Resident Partners are encouraged to check with their veterinarian regarding the time span related to vaccine cycles and activation as they vary per species and

age. Failure to provide updated documentation by the expressed deadline may result in removal of the animal (Section V).

VIII. UMBC Property Access for an ESA

- a. ESAs are restricted from all areas of UMBC property except the UMBC Housing assigned to its Resident Partner, and outdoor areas where the ESA relieves itself. ESAs are not permitted in other areas of UMBC (e.g., dining facilities, libraries, academic buildings, athletic buildings and facilities, classrooms, labs, individual centers, playing/athletic fields, water features such as ponds).
- b. The ESA must be contained within the Resident Partner's privately assigned individual living accommodation (e.g., room, suite, apartment) when the Resident Partner is not present while attending classes or other activities.
- c. When the ESA is unattended, it must remain caged or crated in the Resident Partner's bedroom. Current USDA floor area recommendations for individual dogs are:
 1. Weight < 33 lbs: 8.0 ft²
 2. Weight 33-66 lbs: 12.0 ft²
 3. Weight > 66 lbs: 24.0 ft²
- d. The ESA must be properly housed and restrained or otherwise under the control of its Resident Partner at all times while on University property, including within the UMBC Housing.
- e. When an ESA is outside the private individual living accommodations, it must be in an animal carrier or controlled by a leash or harness at all times while on or in UMBC property.
- f. Resident Partners may not request UMBC community members (including but not limited to roommate(s), other residents, staff, and/or faculty) to care for, control, or maintain their ESA.
- g. If the ESA is taken outside the Resident Partner's privately assigned individual living accommodation for purposes of natural relief, the ESA must wear identification tags with a campus address, a Baltimore County rabies tag, and, if applicable, additional vaccination information.
- h. Notwithstanding the restrictions herein, the ESA must be properly housed and restrained or otherwise under the dominion and control of the Resident Partner at all times. No Resident Partner shall permit the ESA to go loose or run at large. If an ESA is found running at large, the ESA is subject to capture and confinement and immediate removal from UMBC Housing.

IX. Animal Behavior, Health & Well-Being

- a. An ESA may reside in UMBC Housing with its Resident Partner provided that its behavior and care do not create unreasonable disruptions for residents, Residential Life staff, and/or other University community members. Disruptions, including noise levels, will be addressed by Residential Life staff in the same

manner as with all residents. Persistent disruptive behavior and/or immediate aggressive behavior may result in removal of the ESA.

- b. An ill ESA may be removed from UMBC Housing and/or UMBC property, upon notice to its Resident Partner, as applicable. Post-removal notice may occur where the Resident Partner is unavailable or cannot be located.
- c. Bathing or cleaning of an ESA is expected to avoid significant odors and/or to manage the shedding of fur/hair. Resident Partners may not use human showers/tubs within UMBC Housing to bathe or clean their ESA.

X. Resident Partner Responsibilities

- a. The Resident Partner is responsible for abiding by all equally applicable residential policies that are unrelated to the resident's disability such as assuring that the ESA does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of UMBC or cause difficulties for residents who reside there.
- b. Sensitivity to residents, staff, and faculty with allergies, and to those who fear animals, is an important consideration for the Resident Partner to ensure a community environment that supports the individual needs of all who reside or work at UMBC. When a Resident Partner is informed of a person with a medical condition that is affected by the ESA, the Resident Partner should refer the affected person to Residential Life or Student Disability Services if they have a health need or safety concern about exposure to the ESA.
- c. Resident Partners are responsible for feeding and providing water to their ESA within the confines of their bedroom. Food should be kept in a sealed container within the Resident Partner's bedroom.
- d. Resident Partners are responsible for properly containing and disposing of the ESA's solid waste (e.g., feces).
 - i. Indoor waste, and/or used litter, must be disposed of in an outside trash dumpster. Litter boxes may be placed on mats to minimize contamination of carpeted surfaces.
 - ii. Outdoor waste must be immediately retrieved by the Resident Partner, placed in a plastic bag, and securely tied before being disposed of in an outside trash dumpster.
 - iii. While emergency or infrequent use of pet pee pads are permitted, regular use of pet pee pads in UMBC Housing is highly discouraged. Pee pads train animals (primarily dogs) to relieve themselves indoors and create an unsanitary environment with odors that can negatively impact others in a communal living environment. An ESA may be subject to removal if a Resident Partner is unable to maintain a sanitary environment.
 - iv. If the ESA vomits, urinates, leaves solid waste, and/or becomes incontinent, it is the responsibility of the Resident Partner to make sure the contaminated area is cleaned up immediately. If the contamination occurs indoors, clean-up must include disinfectant of the area and carpet

or floor treatment to minimize damage to the facility, as well as odor reduction.

- e. Resident Partners are responsible for taking effective precautions to avoid flea and tick infestations. If the ESA is found to have fleas or ticks, the Resident Partner will be responsible for eliminating the fur coat infestation and laundering all pet bedding, and personal effects. If fleas, ticks, or other pests are detected within the UMBC Housing residence, impacted residents will be notified, and the infestation will be treated using approved fumigation methods by a UMBC-approved pest control service. The Resident Partner will be billed, as are all residents, for the expense of any required pest management due to the actions or negligence of the Resident Partner.
- f. The Resident Partner is financially responsible for the actions of the ESA including bodily injury or property damage, beyond ordinary wear and tear, including, but not limited to, any replacement or treatment of furniture, carpet, drapes, or wall covering. The Resident Partner is expected to reimburse these costs upon repair and/or move-out, whichever is earliest. If a repair is made prior to move-out, charges will be posted to the Resident Partner's myUMBC account for payment.
- g. The Resident Partner agrees, as all residents do, to continue to abide by all other Residential Life policies. Having an ESA does not preclude the Resident Partner from following all other guidelines found in The UMBC Residential Rights & Responsibilities guide and the UMBC Code of Student Conduct.
- h. If a Resident Partner is unable to care for their ESA, due to extended travel and/or illness, they must make off-campus arrangements for the care of their ESA. Resident Partner roommate(s), other residential residents, staff, and/or faculty are not eligible to care for an ESA.
- i. Any violation of the above rules or guidelines, or other UMBC rules or policies, will be reviewed by Residential Life. The Resident Partner will be afforded appropriate due process within this review.
- j. Should the ESA be disqualified or removed from the premises for any reason, the Resident Partner will remain responsible for the terms and conditions of the Housing License for the remainder of the term of the License.

By my signature below, I verify that I have read, understand, and will abide by the Guidelines outlined here.

Resident Partner Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

for Resident Partners Under 18 Years

I furthermore give permission to the Office of Residential Life to disclose information related to others impacted (e.g., Residence Life Staff, potential and/or actual roommate(s)/neighbor(s)) by the presence of my ESA. Such information shall be solely limited to information related to the ESA and shall not include information related to my disability.

I understand that the information about the ESA will be shared with the intent of preparing for the presence of the ESA.

Resident Partner Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature
for Resident Partners Under 18 Years

Date

Director of Residential Life or Designee

Date

UMBC OFFICE OF RESIDENTIAL LIFE ESA REGISTRATION FORM

Please complete this form and submit it to Residential Life a minimum of 5 business days prior to move-in day each semester in which the ESA will arrive on campus. A new form must be completed if any changes in the information about your ESA occur. Important to note, animals cannot be brought into UMBC housing without completion of the Residential Life registration.

ESA Registration Documentation Checklist

- ☐ Signed copy of the *Procedural Guidelines and Agreement for Maintaining an Emotional Support Animal for Residential Students at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County*
- ☐ UMBC Office of Residential Life ESA Registration Form
- ☐ Veterinarian Verification Form
- ☐ Copy of animal's current health and vaccination records
- ☐ Color photograph of the ESA
- ☐ Copy of Baltimore County License:
<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/pai/miscellaneous-permits/animal-license> (Cats & Dogs Only)
- ☐ Copy of Training Certificate (optional)

Resident's Name _____

Residents's Campus ID _____

Resident's Permanent Address _____

Resident's Home Phone _____

Resident's Campus Address _____

Resident's Campus Email _____

Resident's Cell Phone _____

Emergency Contact's Name _____

Off-campus contact who should be granted access to your animal in the event of an emergency.

Emergency Contact's Phone Number _____

ESA's Name _____

Species of Animal and Breed Description of the ESA _____

Is the ESA current on veterinary recommended vaccinations? ☐ YES ☐ NO

VETERINARIAN VERIFICATION FORM

Please attach the Veterinarian's Verification that the ESA has all Veterinary recommended vaccinations and that those vaccinations have been fully administered and activated to maintain the ESA's health and prevent contagious disease.

Veterinarian's Name and/or Clinic: _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

ESA Information

Owner's Name _____

Animal's Name _____

Animal's Species & Breed _____

Animal's Current Weight _____

Animal's Expected Max. Weight _____

Animal's Sex _____

Spayed or Neutered ☐ YES ☐ NO

Please check all that apply and attach current vaccination records:

- ☐ Rabies
- ☐ DHLPP + C (Distemper, Hepatitis, Leptospirosis, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza, Corona)
- ☐ Bordetella
- ☐ FVRCP (Panleukopenia, Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Chlamydia)
- ☐ FeLV (Feline Leukemia)
- ☐ Other: _____

By my signature below, I verify:

- The above-mentioned animal has all current vaccinations as required and that those vaccinations have been fully administered and activated.
- That all the above vaccinations will remain current through August 2026
- That the above-mentioned animal has been given a stool sample test for internal parasites.
- That the above animal is in general good health.

Veterinarian Signature _____ **Date** _____