**Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) FAQ Resource**

* **What is the difference between an ESA and a Service Animal?**
	+ A service animal is an animal specifically trained to perform tasks for an individual. These tasks can range from seizure alerting, deep pressure therapy (DPT), seeing eye guidance, and more. These animals are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and are a right to students. Service animals are also allowed in all locations on campus.
	+ An ESA is an assistive animal that is not specifically trained in tasks for the individual, but rather provides necessary emotional support. Individuals go through a process of applying and proving need of an ESA and can then have the role of an ESA filled by any “pet.” These animals are protected under the Fair Housing Act (FHA), but are more limited in where they can be present in residential areas.
* **What kind of animals can be ESAs?**
	+ Any animal can be an ESA and will be specifically communicated upon approval for an ESA. The most common ESAs include dogs, cats, rabbits, and guinea pigs. However, do not be terribly surprised if a resident has a lizard, bird, snake, etc. Support styles can look different for everyone!
* **Where are ESAs located/allowed to be on campus?**
	+ ESAs are to reside in the assigned resident’s dorm, apartment, or house. They also have access to the outside public areas, as well as hallways and stairwells to get there, for the ESA’s relief, but must be under control of a leash (as a minimum). ESAs should NOT be in unassigned rooms, staying long amounts of time in public lounges, or in academic buildings.
* **What is an appropriate way to interact with these residents and their ESAs?**
	+ DO:
		- Treat them with the same respect that you would any resident. You may not know specifically which resident is the handler of the ESA in a room, but you may respectfully ask if an issue arises. More than likely the individual will tell you without you even needing to ask.
	+ DO NOT:
		- Inquire about the reasonings behind their having an ESA. That is their information to divulge if they choose.
		- Immediately assume that the resident is alright with you petting/interacting with the ESA. Although these animals are not “on-the-clock" like service animals are, you should always ask permission before interacting with or petting the ESA. Animals are like people in that they do not always want attention from strangers right away.
* **What should ESAs not be doing?**
	+ Causing unruly disruption including (but not limited to):
		- Barking consistently
		- Running around unleashed
		- Exhibiting aggression towards others
		- Demanding attention excessively
		- Unruly flatulence
		- Overly unclean or odorous
	+ Relieving themselves indoors inappropriately. They must be housebroken or confined to a specific area (I.e. a litter box, cage, etc.).
	+ Causing physical damage to college property.
	+ Being a threat to individuals around them and/or causing physical harm (having a history of biting is included here as well)
	+ Be under the care of someone other than the handler for a prolonged period of time
* **What should I do if there is an incident involving an ESA?**
	+ Depending on the severity of the incident, a complaint could be brought forward, or an incident report may need to be filed. Either way, you should loop in your RD and ensure that the information is passed along.
	+ Think safety first! If this is a safety threatening and urgent/current situation, call Dispatch.
	+ It is helpful to know that not all incidents result in the removal of the ESA. It may look like a mitigation process such as enrollment in an obedience class, usage of a muzzle, and so on.
	+ PLEASE CONSIDER: This experience/process may be distressing to the victim AND the handler, and possibly result in roommate conflicts, lowered mental health, and so on. Be sure to circle back and check in on the residents and ask how you can best support them. All people deserve to be treated with respect and care!
* **Where can I direct residents to gain more information/apply for an ESA?**
	+ Direct them to the Office of Disability Services. Please also note that the application process can take a while, and that the deadline for the Spring Semester is November 1st, and the Fall Semester is March 5th.
* **For more information:**
	+ Assist Animal Policy Handbook:
		- <https://www.messiah.edu/download/downloads/id/6670/Animal_Assist_Policy_1_2019.pdf>
	+ Contact the Office of Disability Services:
		- Email Amy Slody: aslody@messiah.edu
		- Phone: 717-796-5382
	+ Contact the Office of Residence Life:
		- Email Housing: housing@messiah.edu
		- Phone: 717-796-5239
	+ Talk with your respective RDs!