

**UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE**

**INDEX TITLE:** Administration and General

**POLICY TITLE:** Emotional Support Animal Policy

**LAST REVISED:** July 10, 2022

## **General Definitions**

**Service animals:** Individually trained dogs that do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities, including but not limited to, guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack. They are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Animals whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA. ([https://www.ada.gov/service\\_animals\\_2010.htm](https://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm))

**Emotional support animals:** Animals that provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. Emotional support animals are not limited to dogs. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an emotional support animal is any animal that provides emotional support alleviating one or more symptoms or effects of a person's disability. (<https://adata.org/service-animal-resource-hub/differences>)

## **Policy**

It is the policy of Student Health Services to provide a supportive environment for all students. The staff at Student Health Services recognizes the value in animals that provide emotional support and comfort; however, they also recognize the inherent risks to the client, the animal, and the public. Student Health Services providers do not have specialized training and experience in human-animal interactions and are bound to operate within their scope of practice. Therefore, the clinical staff at Student Health Services abstains from writing letters of support for Emotional Support Animals. Similarly, the staff at Student Health Services does not "approve" Emotional Support Animals on campus. Such approvals must come from the Disability Resources and Services (DRS) and Residence Life.

## References

[https://www.ccu.edu/\\_files/documents/life-directions/human-animal-interventions-in-counseling-interest-network-position-statement.pdf](https://www.ccu.edu/_files/documents/life-directions/human-animal-interventions-in-counseling-interest-network-position-statement.pdf)

University of Pittsburgh's Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion website, Service Animals and Support Animals

Laws and Ethics Related to Emotional Support Animals, Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, online Sept 2020

<https://vaden.stanford.edu/medical-services/medical-services-resources/mental-health/emotional-support-animals-and-caps>

<https://adata.org/service-animal-resource-hub/differences>