



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDER SUPPORT LETTER

Student's Name: _____

Proposed ESA Name: _____

Type of animal: _____ Age of animal: _____

Randolph College recognizes that having an ESA in the residence hall can be a real benefit for someone with a significant mental health disorder; however, the practical limitations of our housing arrangements make it necessary to carefully consider the impact of the request for an ESA on both the student and the campus community.

The above-named student has indicated that you are the health care provider who has suggested that having an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) in the residence hall will have therapeutic benefit in alleviating one or more of the identified symptoms or effects of the student's **mental health disability**.

Generally, we accept documentation from providers in the State of Virginia, or the student's home state, who have personal knowledge of the student, consistent with their professional obligations. Letters purchased from the internet for a set price rarely provide the information necessary to support an ESA request.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has been asked to investigate websites that purport to provide documentation from a health care provider in support of requests for an ESA. The websites in question offer for sale documentation that is not reliable for purposes of determining whether an individual has a disability or disability-related need for an ESA because the website operators and health care professionals who consult with them lack the personal knowledge that is necessary to make such determinations.

So that we may better evaluate the request for this accommodation, **please write a letter of support, on business letterhead**, and include the following:

Information about the Student's Disability

Federal law defines a person with a disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that ***substantially limits* one or more major life activities**. That suggests that a diagnosis (label) does not necessarily equate with a disability (substantial limitation).

- What is the nature of the student's mental health impairment (that is, how is the student **substantially limited**?)

- Does the student require ongoing treatment?
- When did you first meet with the student regarding this mental health diagnosis?

Information About the Proposed ESA (Please note that there are some restrictions on the kind of animal that can be approved for student housing; it is possible the student may be approved for an ESA, based on the information you provide here, but **may not be allowed to bring the specific animal named.**)

- Is the animal named here one that **you specifically prescribed as part of treatment for the student**, or is it a pet that you believe will have a beneficial effect for the student while in residence on campus?
- **What symptoms will be reduced** by having an ESA?
- Is there **evidence** that an ESA has helped this student in the past or currently?
- In your opinion, how important is it for the student's well-being that an ESA be in residence on campus?
- What consequences, in terms of disability symptomatology, may result if the accommodation is not approved?

This student was provided with a copy the Randolph College ESA Policy which details rules and regulations surrounding the presence of an animal in campus housing.

- Has the student shared this policy with you?
- Have you discussed the responsibilities associated with properly caring for an animal while engaged in typical college activities and residing in campus housing?
- Do you believe those responsibilities might exacerbate the student's symptoms in any way?

The letter should be sent to Larvail Jones, Coordinator of Access Services via email (ljones@randolphcollege.edu), fax (434-947-8399), or regular post (Randolph College, 2500 Rivermont Avenue, Lynchburg, VA 24503).

STUDENT: please sign this form and give it to your mental health service provider to complete.

By signing below, **I consent to allow my mental health service provider to share any information relevant to my need for an ESA** as an accommodation with the Coordinator of Access Services.

Signature

Date