

Emotional Support Animal Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

This document provides answers to commonly asked questions about this new policy. Also included are a number of questions that might be asked by tenants interested in having an emotional support animal (ESA).

Q What is an emotional support animal? How is it different from a pet?

A An emotional support animal (ESA) provides comfort to relieve a symptom or effect of a person's disability. The animal must be recommended by a qualified mental health or medical professional. Like a trained service animal, an ESA is not a pet and is not subject to a no-pets policy.

Application

Q Can the housing authority ask why someone needs an ESA?

A No, housing authorities only need to know that a disability exists. The nature of the disability is confidential information. To verify their need, the tenant is required to provide a completed Emotional Support Animal Medical Form signed by a qualified mental health professional (such as a psychologist or a psychiatrist), or a family physician, or a nurse practitioner. This form is part of the application package.

Q The application asks questions about the ESA, but the tenant hasn't adopted it yet. How do they fill it out?

A It isn't possible to answer questions about an animal you've never met. The tenant or their mental health or medical professional might already have an ESA in mind. This can help the tenant answer some of the questions on the application. These questions were included to assist you in placing the tenant and their future ESA in a suitable unit. If they have been left unanswered, the application can still be approved if it meets all other criteria.

Q What if a tenant requests an accommodation for an animal that is not a dog, cat, bird, or fish?

A If a tenant requests accommodation for an animal that isn't a dog, cat, bird, or fish, SHC will need to approve the type of animal.

Q How many emotional support animals are permitted per unit?

A Only one ESA is allowed in each unit (except for fish). For requests for more than one animal, please contact SHC.

Q Can another tenant act as an emergency caregiver?

A Another tenant may be one of the caregivers. The ESA can remain with a caregiver who is also a tenant for up to three days.

Q Why are two emergency caregivers needed?

A Caregivers will be contacted in the order they appear on your form. If your first emergency caregiver is another tenant, they may only care for your animal for up to three days. After the three days have passed, the next caregiver will be contacted to pick up your animal. If no caregiver is available, local animal control authorities or humane societies may be called to take and care for the animal.

Approval of ESA Applications

Q How do I approve an ESA application?

- A Carefully review the whole ESA application package to determine if the tenant meets the eligibility criteria. You may wish to:
- Contact the applicant and ask further questions about their ESA's behaviour if you have concerns about how the Animal Behaviour section was answered.
 - Review the Emergency Caregiver Contact Form; you may want to check in HOMES to see if the caregiver(s) are SHC tenants.
 - Make sure the Emotional Support Animal Medical Form is completed and signed.

Q How is an ESA application denied?

A The Saskatchewan Human Rights Council (SHRC) has advised that very few (if any) applications should be refused. All refusals require SHC consultation before notifying the applicant.

Reasons for denying an ESA accommodation include:

- Insufficient documentation regarding the recommendation by a mental health or medical professional and the tenant's need to have an ESA in their home.
- The animal poses a threat to the health and/or safety of other tenants. For example, allergies or past emotional trauma associated with a similar animal.
- The application contains too many animals or the application contains an animal that is not allowed as a pet in local bylaws.

Q If an ESA is approved, what do I need to do next?

- A Follow these steps if a tenant is approved for ESA:
1. Notify the tenant in writing that their application was approved. Let them know of any documentation (vaccination records, licensing, etc.) that you still need.
 2. Arrange a time to discuss and sign the lease addendum. Answer any questions and provide the tenant with a copy of the signed lease addendum for their reference.

3. Order the appropriate signage and place it in the areas required. Show your tenant the areas set aside for the care of their ESA (i.e. dog relief area, garbage for bagged litter, doors to be used, etc.). For more information about getting ready for the arrival of an ESA, please consult the official policy.

Q What local bylaws apply to an ESA?

A Your municipal government will be able to answer any questions about bylaws related to an ESA, including:

- Licensing requirements;
- Vaccination standards;
- Any spay/neuter policies; and
- Waste disposal directions.

If the local bylaw differs from this policy, the local bylaw will apply.

Managing a Location with an ESA

Q What happens if another tenant complains about the ESA?

A Tenants may complain about an ESA in the building without having a specific grievance. In this situation, explain that an emotional support animal is part of an accessibility accommodation, like a wheelchair ramp or closed captioning.

If the tenant has a specific issue handle the complaint as you would any other and work with the ESA's owner to correct it:

- First complaint about the issue: Notify the owner verbally that a complaint was made about their ESA. Let them know what they need to do to correct the issue. Document the verbal warning.
- Subsequent complaints about the issue: Issue a written warning with a deadline to correct the behavior. If the written warnings are ignored the ESA may have to be removed.

Q How do I handle an emergency situation with an ESA involved?

A If there is an emergency, call 911 immediately. The authorities will determine how to handle the situation.

If the ESA's owner is involved in an emergency situation that will require them to be away from their rental unit overnight, contact the emergency caregiver listed on the Caregiver Contact form. An example would be a situation where the tenant is injured and admitted to a hospital, where they may remain for several days.