

## **How to Qualify for an Emotional Support Animal in Florida**

Qualifying for an emotional support animal under Florida law is similar to the procedure under federal Fair Housing rules. Generally, owners of emotional support animals have invisible disabilities such as depression, anxiety, PTSD or phobias. A tenant can prove that they have a disability related need for an emotional support animal by submitting an ESA recommendation letter from a licensed health care practitioner to their landlord.

A wide range of health care practitioners are permitted to provide ESA letters in Florida, including:

- psychologists
- mental health counselors
- marriage and family therapists
- social workers
- psychiatrists
- doctors
- registered nurses

In addition to being allowed to ask for an ESA letter from a licensed provider, landlords are also permitted to request proof of compliance with state and local requirements for licensing and vaccination of the ESA. An emotional support animal is not exempt from general licensing and vaccination rules that generally apply to all animals in the tenant's jurisdiction. (Vet Records)

## **Invalid Forms of ESA Documentation in Florida**

Like the recent guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Housing, the new law in Florida attempts to curb the spread of inadequate forms of ESA documentation. In Florida, registrations, identification cards, patches, certificates or similar registrations obtained online will not by themselves be sufficient to establish the tenant has a disability-related need for an emotional support animal.

Florida's ESA rules make clear that in order to have a valid emotional support animal, the tenant must possess documentation from a licensed health care practitioner.

All prospective ESA owners should understand that a mere certificate, ID or registration bought online will not be enough to properly qualify their animal companion as an ESA.