



Fair Housing:
It's the Law!

FAIR HOUSING TIP OF THE MONTH:

MULTIPLE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

Under fair housing laws, tenants with disabilities have the right to request an emotional support animal (ESA) to help alleviate the effects of their disability. Even if a housing provider has a strict no-pets policy, a request for an ESA may still be granted. This is because ESAs are not considered pets—they are a reasonable accommodation for a tenant's disability.

Unlike service animals, ESAs do not need to be trained for a specific purpose. Emotional support animals provide support that minimizes the effects of a disability, allowing a person to better use and enjoy their housing.

WHAT IF I NEED TO HAVE MORE THAN ONE ESA?

Tenants with disabilities have the right to request more than one ESA. However, each ESA must meet the same basic requirement: they must be necessary for a person with disabilities to equally use or enjoy their housing.

While you may request more than one ESA at any point, and many people have more than one ESA, there are special considerations. In evaluating whether your request for multiple ESAs is reasonable, a housing provider may consider whether the cumulative impact of multiple animals in the same unit would create an undue burden or would fundamentally alter their business.

Because requests for multiple ESAs may face additional scrutiny from landlords, verification letters for these requests are very important.



VERIFICATION FOR MULTIPLE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

When requesting multiple ESAs, it is important to include language explaining how each animal allows you to manage your disability. It is also recommended that you include the species of the animals. While an ESA cannot be denied because of its breed, size, or weight, the species of each animal may help to inform why multiple animals are necessary. For example, a dog may require regular walking, which can promote exercise, while a cat may promote a calming atmosphere.

To illustrate, we have included an example modeled after a successful request for multiple ESAs. The original verification letter was written from the perspective of a healthcare professional familiar with the tenant making the request.

Multiple Emotional Support Animals

EXAMPLE OF VERIFICATION FOR MULTIPLE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

I am familiar with the limitations imposed by Mr. Doe's diagnosed disability and the need to mitigate those limitations. My observations suggest that emotional distress substantially limits one or more major life activities for Mr. Doe. Feelings of being overwhelmed and stressed affect his ability to complete activities of daily living, and feelings of sadness and isolation affect his ability to enjoy his home and community. I recommend the following emotional support animals to assist in coping with these symptoms:

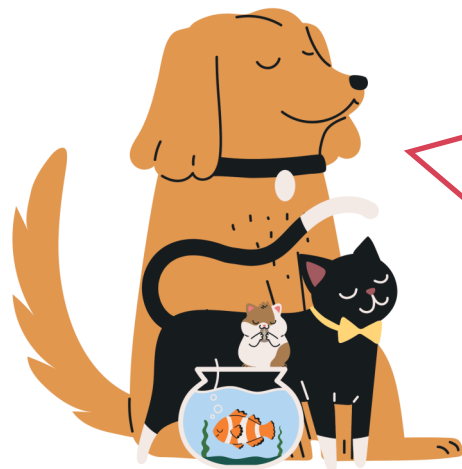
- Cat - Autumn, 10 lbs., Tabby
- Cat - Abigail, 6 lbs., Domestic Shorthair
- Cat - Essence, 8 lbs., Mix-Breed

In my professional opinion, it is necessary the animals live with Mr. Doe as their presence will mitigate symptoms of his disability in the following ways:

AUTUMN senses when Mr. Doe is sad. She comes to him and rubs against him, purrs, and he talks to her, which elevates Mr. Doe's mood and decreases his anxiety. She also sleeps with Mr. Doe. She lays beside him and purrs, which provides a distraction, so his thoughts remain in the present moment. This calms Mr. Doe and helps him go to sleep.

ABIGAIL gives Mr. Doe a sense of responsibility. He looks after her medical needs and keeps her healthy. She elevates Mr. Doe's mood through her antics and how well she integrates with the other cats.

ESSENCE is energetic. He motivates Mr. Doe to get up and play with him, which increases Mr. Doe's activity level despite his limited mobility.



Please note that each animal is addressed separately, and the helpful effects associated with each animal are listed in detail. Your verification does not need to look like the example above, but you should consider what factors make your support animals helpful for your disability. You can use the above example as a starting point, but your verification should be tailored to your needs, your experiences, and your animal friends.

Stay Tuned!

This tip was Part II of our three-part Fair Housing Month series. In Part I, we covered the basic information for requesting an emotional support animal as a reasonable accommodation. In our final tip of this series, we will discuss how a request for an emotional support animal may be applied to family members or guests.



Multiple Emotional Support Animals

NEED MORE HELP?

If you think that you have been denied equal access to the protections we discussed, or if you have other fair housing issues that were not discussed here, you may want to seek help. The information provided here is not a replacement for legal advice and counsel. If you have any questions about your legal situation, **we strongly encourage you to reach out to a legal expert.**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers help for individuals whose fair housing rights may have been violated. Federal fair housing laws also prohibit discrimination in housing based on the following characteristics: race, religion, national origin, color, sex, familial status, and disability.

You can find more information on these protections and examples here:

[HUD: Never Good Cause to Discriminate](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/FHEO/documents/Never%20Good%20Cause.pdf)
(<https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/FHEO/documents/Never%20Good%20Cause.pdf>)

To file a complaint with HUD, call 800-669-9777, or visit their complaint site here:

[HUD: File a Complaint](https://www.hud.gov/fairhousing/fileacomplaint)
(<https://www.hud.gov/fairhousing/fileacomplaint>)

You can also reach out to a legal aid organization for assistance, such as Mental Health Advocacy Services, Inc. (MHAS). We have experience aiding our clients in contacting prospective landlords regarding housing discrimination. If you have a mental health disability, we may be able to assist you. You can reach the MHAS offices by phone at (213) 389-2077 (TTY: 800-735-2929) or by email at info@mhas-la.org.

