

Rx for Your Health: Pets



A growing body of scientific research shows that pets are good medicine – good for the body and soul, according to Dr. Latimer. “The health benefits of pets for seniors go far beyond simply the physical activity required to care for a pet, such as walking a dog. That physical activity is important, but it seems that even more important is the emotional bond people form with their pets that helps keep them happier and healthier than they might be otherwise,” says Dr. Latimer. Among the benefits of pet ownership are reduced loneliness, especially among dog owners. Interaction with pets doesn’t require pet ownership – you can spend time regularly with a friend’s pet and still benefit.

If you’d like to own a pet for health reasons but your condominium doesn’t allow it, you may be able to appeal the decision. Look for information from Citizens for Pets in Condos on their Website, www.petsincondos.org.

www.HumanaActiveOutlook.com

This information has been brought to you by Citizens FOR Pets in Condos. We are a non-profit public advocacy and educational organization dedicated to increasing acceptance of companion animals in condos and other types of association-run housing. We educate the public about the health benefits of having animal companions and also advocate for responsible pet ownership/guardianship. Our motto: “creating a win-win situation for both people & pets.”



www.petsincondos.org
954 366-4555

We provide resources for a pet-friendly
America/Florida

Emotional Support Animals

If you suffer from anxiety, depression or any number of emotional ailments that affect your ability to fully function and live comfortably, you may qualify to have an emotional support animal even in so-called no-pets housing. You may also be able to have an ESA if you have emotional components to serious physical conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, angina, or asthma.

An ESA is a subcategory of assistance animals. ESAs are meant **for use in the home setting**. You need a service animal, instead, if you require assistance outside the home.

Assistance animals are legally not pets any more. **ESAs are covered by federal fair housing and rehabilitation law.** Service animals are covered by federal disability law. Another class of ESA for air travel is covered by the US Dept. of Transportation.

New HUD rules strike down some of the obstacles to ESA's in "no pet" housing as follows:

1. Specialized task training of ESAs is unnecessary - “emotional support animals do not need training to ameliorate the effects of a person's mental and emotional disabilities. Emotional support animals by their very nature, and without training, may relieve depression and anxiety, and/or help reduce stress-induced pain in persons with certain medical conditions affected by stress.”

2. Documentation of the need for an ESA may come from "physician, psychiatrist, social worker, or other mental health professional." In Florida, "other mental health professionals" include:

- **licensed mental health counselors**
- **licensed clinical psychologists**
- **licensed clinical social workers**
- **licensed marriage and family therapists.**

3. There is no need for formal CERTIFICATION of the disability.

REQUESTING A REASONABLE ACCOMODATION STEP BY STEP

from Barbara Feeney, MPA

1) get a doctor's letter . The important things that need to be included in the letter are 1) a statement that you have a disabling condition, 2) a statement that having a support animal "**ameliorates and helps" you with a major life function** and 3) something to indicate the qualifications of the letter writer - degree and state license number.

"From my experience, the key to a successful request for a 'prescription pet' is for the health care provider to specify in writing that he/she is 'prescribing' the assistance/emotional support animal as a 'necessary component of ongoing treatment'". -- Barbara Feeney, MPA, at Treasure Coast Health Council.

2) Once you have your doctor's letter create a cover letter with a question, like "Based on the attached documentation from my doctor, may I please keep my emotional support animal?"

3) Now mail everything via certified mail:

- Mail letters to the property manager (or association president) by certified mail, return receipt requested.
- Include the original, signed letter from your physician with your letter to the property manager (or association president).
- Send copies of your letters, for information only (FYI) to Office of Equal Opportunity and Legal Aid Society in your county, stating that you are NOT filing a complaint at this time, but that you want to let them know what is going on and that you may be filing a complaint in the future.
- **Keep the copies of all correspondence in a very safe place.**

Our web site has sample letters and much more detail on this topic.