

Essential Checklist for a Legally Compliant ESA Letter

Use this checklist to confirm your Emotional Support Animal (ESA) letter meets legal standards. Review each item carefully before submitting your letter to a landlord or housing provider.

A. Provider and License Details

- The letter is written by a licensed mental health professional. [☐]
- The provider is licensed in my state of residence. [☐]
- The provider's full name appears on the letter. [☐]
- The provider's license type is listed. [☐]
- The license number is included. [☐]
- The issuing state or jurisdiction is clearly stated. [☐]
- Contact details are present (address, phone, or email). [☐]

B. Letter Format and Presentation

- The letter appears on official professional letterhead. [☐]
- The letter is properly formatted and not a generic template. [☐]
- The issue date is clearly stated. [☐]
- The provider's signature is included. [☐]
- My full legal name appears in the letter. [☐]
- The letter states I am under the provider's care. [☐]

C. Required Legal Content

- The letter states I have a qualifying mental or emotional disability. [☐]
- It explains how the disability affects daily living or major life activities. [☐]
- It states the ESA is part of my treatment or care plan. [☐]
- It connects the ESA to symptom relief or improved functioning. [☐]
- It states the ESA is required, not optional. [☐]
- For housing use, the letter mentions accommodation under housing laws. [☐]

D. Privacy and Appropriateness

- The letter does not disclose unnecessary medical details. [☐]
- No sensitive information is included without my consent. [☐]

- The language used is simple and appropriate for landlords. []
- I feel comfortable sharing this letter with a housing provider. []

E. Red Flags to Watch For

- No mental-health evaluation was provided before issuing the letter. []
- The provider or website promised instant approval. []
- The letter includes “registration,” “certificate,” or “ID card” claims. []
- No license number or state is provided. []
- My name is missing or incorrect. []
- The document appears generic or suspicious. []
- The provider cannot be verified in state license search tools. []

F. Final Review Before Submitting

- All required elements are present. []
- The provider’s identity and license have been verified. []
- The letter feels personalized, not auto-generated. []
- The purpose of the ESA is clearly stated. []
- I understand ESA housing protections and responsibilities. []

Important Notes:

- **State Requirements Vary:** California requires a 30-day provider relationship. Check your state's specific rules before submitting your letter.
- **Annual Updates Recommended:** Consider renewing your letter annually, especially before moving to a new residence.
- **ESA ≠ Service Animal:** This letter is for housing accommodation only—ESAs do not have public access rights like service animals.
- **Your Privacy is Protected:** Landlords can verify provider credentials but cannot ask for your diagnosis or detailed medical records.

If items are missing: Request corrections from your provider before submitting to your landlord. A complete and accurate ESA letter improves your chances of approval and protects your housing rights.