7 Things Renters Should Know Before Getting an ESA Letter Online

Searching for an ESA letter online can be confusing. Some sites promise instant approval, and others sell certificates that carry no weight with landlords. GetPetESA takes a more cautious route. It connects renters with mental health professionals licensed in their own state, who decide whether a letter is appropriate. Here are seven things worth knowing before you begin.

1. A Licensed Clinician Makes the Decision

GetPetESA is a letter service, not a law firm, a government agency, or a registry. After you finish the free assessment, an independent clinician reviews your answers and decides whether a letter is clinically appropriate. That is why no one can promise approval in advance. It is also why a letter based on a real evaluation carries more weight with landlords than an automated one.

2. Your State Shapes the Process

The assessment asks where you live first, so your evaluation goes to someone licensed in your state. California, Arkansas, Iowa, Louisiana, and Montana require a 30-day client relationship before a letter can be written, and it begins when your clinician starts your evaluation. Each state has its own page in the ESA letter by state guides.

3. Pricing Is Visible Before You Start

You see the full price before answering a single question, and you pay only after the assessment. An ESA letter for one animal is $99, and $129 covers two or three animals in one letter. A PSD letter is $119, both letters together are $169, and an annual renewal is $79. If no letter is issued, you get a full refund. Compare the options on the pricing page.

4. ESA and PSD Letters Are Different Documents

An ESA letter supports a housing request for an emotional support animal. A PSD letter is for a dog individually trained to do tasks related to your condition. Neither is a registration or certificate, and the United States has no official ESA registry. Florida, Iowa, and Montana say outright that online registrations do not count as documentation.

5. Landlords Can Verify the Letter

Property managers see plenty of questionable paperwork. GetPetESA letters carry the clinician's license details, and a landlord can send the letter's reference number through the landlord information page. With your permission, GetPetESA confirms that the letter was issued, by which clinician, and on what date. No health information is shared, and the service is free. You can see the format in the sample ESA letter.

6. Housing Rules Changed Recently

HUD withdrew its 2020 assistance animal guidance on September 17, 2025. On May 22, 2026, it narrowed its enforcement to cases involving animals trained to help with a disability. The Fair Housing Act and its reasonable accommodation rule did not change, and private lawsuits remain available. California, Colorado, Maryland, New York City, and Pennsylvania have said ESAs remain protected under their own laws. You can follow updates in the housing rights guide.

7. A Letter Has Limits

A letter supports your request, but the housing provider decides. A landlord may deny a request if the animal poses a direct threat, would cause major damage, or creates an undue burden, and some small owner-occupied buildings are exempt. You can still file with your state agency or in court.

ESAs also lack airline protection. Since January 2021, they travel under pet policies, so GetPetESA does not sell travel letters.

How It Works in Brief

Take the free four-minute assessment, choose your letter, and let your clinician evaluate your answers. If a letter is issued, you receive it signed and dated, usually within one to two business days after the evaluation. The How it works page has the full walkthrough, and the clinical standards page explains how evaluations are handled. Support is available in English and Spanish.

Quick Answers

Is an online ESA letter legitimate? It can be, when a clinician licensed in your state actually evaluates you. Automatically approved letters and registrations are what landlords and several state laws reject.

What if I don't qualify? You are told a letter isn't appropriate right now, and your payment is refunded in full. More answers are in the FAQ.

Take the First Step

If you need housing documentation for an emotional support animal, GetPetESA offers a free assessment, a clinician licensed in your state, upfront pricing, and a refund if no letter is issued. Start your free assessment or visit getpetesa.com to explore every guide.

GetPetESA is not a law firm, and nothing in this article is legal advice.