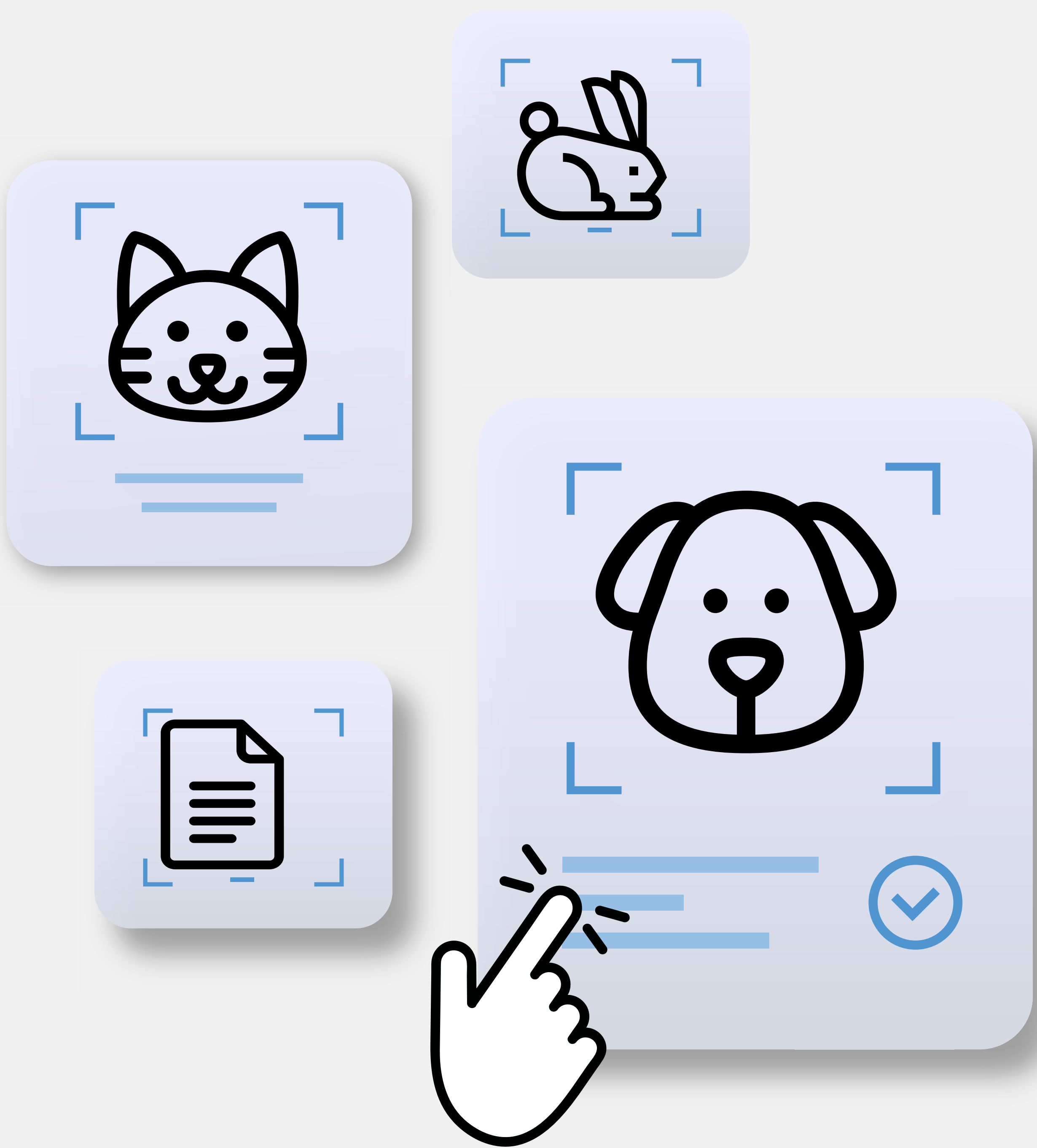


# Resources for California Tenants Requesting Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Accommodation



*The images provided are for illustrative purposes only and do not represent real-life situations or actual individuals. Any resemblance to actual events, people, or entities is purely coincidental.*



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# Understand Your Rights When Requesting an Emotional Support Animal in Rental Housing

Living with a mental health condition or disability can be challenging—and having the support of an Emotional Support Animal (ESA) can make a real difference. If your landlord is refusing to allow your ESA or making the process difficult, you may feel overwhelmed or unsure of your rights.

Unfortunately, Tenant Law Group cannot assist all tenants who contact our firm with direct legal representation. However, we believe in empowering all California renters with information.

This document is a free resource for tenants navigating issues specifically related to ESAs—including what qualifies as an ESA, how to properly request an accommodation, and what steps to take if your landlord refuses your request.





# What Is an Emotional Support Animal (ESA)?

An ESA is a pet that provides comfort or emotional stability to a person with a mental health condition or disability. Unlike service animals, ESAs do not require special training.

In housing situations, tenants with a verified disability have the legal right to request an accommodation to live with an ESA, even if the property has a “no pets” policy.

# Do I Have the Right to an ESA in California?

Yes. Under federal and state fair housing laws, including in particular:

- Fair Housing Act (FHA).
- California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA).

Landlords are required to make reasonable accommodations for tenants with disabilities, which may include allowing an ESA.

# How Do I Request ESA Accommodation?

To request an ESA accommodation, consider the following:

1. Submit a written request to your landlord or property manager.
2. Include a letter or documentation from a licensed healthcare provider confirming that:
  - You have a disability (diagnosis not always required); and
  - The ESA is necessary to support your mental health or well-being.

Tip: Keep a copy of everything you submit and confirm receipt with your landlord.





# Can a Landlord Deny My ESA Accommodation?

## A landlord can only deny an ESA request if:

- Your initial or subsequent requests do not include proper documentation proving the need for a reasonable accommodation;
- The animal poses a direct threat to others or the property; or
- Allowing the animal would place an undue financial or administrative burden on the landlord.

## A landlord cannot deny your request simply because:

- They don't allow pets;
- The animal is a certain breed; or
- They personally disagree with ESA laws.

If your landlord denies a reasonable request without valid legal grounds, this may be housing discrimination.





# What If My Landlord Retaliates or Tries to Evict Me?

Retaliation for requesting an ESA accommodation is illegal. If your landlord:

- Threatens eviction after your request;
- Harasses you about your animal; or
- Raises your rent or restricts access to amenities.

You may have the right to file a housing discrimination complaint with the [California Civil Rights Department \(CRD\)](#) or [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#).

## ESA Protections for California Tenants Are Not Unlimited

While tenants have important rights, there are reasonable limits on ESA accommodations:

- Tenants are responsible for cleaning up after and controlling their animal;
- ESA requests must be made in good faith, with legitimate documentation, at the request of the landlord/property management; and
- Some online ESA “certificates” may not meet legal standards if not backed by a licensed provider.

Landlords may ask for verification, but they cannot demand access to certain medical records or details of your diagnosis.





## Additional Resources

- [Emotional Support Animal Laws in California](#)

## Where Can I Get Help with ESA Housing Issues?

If you are a tenant navigating issues specifically related to ESAs and Tenant Law Group is unable to represent you, the following legal aid and advocacy organizations can assist.

### ***Tenant Law Group Legal Aid Directory***



See the full list by scanning the QR code or clicking the link to visit our [website](#).

*This document provides general information about landlord-tenant laws in California and is not intended as legal advice. We encourage you to consult with a qualified tenant rights attorney or local tenant advocacy organization for guidance specific to your situation.*

