



CCSM Issues Development Subcommittee Final Board Approved 04-09-2026

Emotional Support Animal Issue Statement

Issue:

The Consumer Council System of Maine (CCSM) in our statutory role to advise OBH and other entities is writing this statement to highlight an area of collaboration needed to address an important issue. The Council has received a number of reports from community members stating they are being denied permanent supported housing, charged illegal fees, or otherwise discriminated against because they rely on an Emotional Support Animal (ESA), also known as Assistance Animals, as part of their mental health recovery. Despite clear protections under the Maine Human Rights Act and federal Fair Housing Act, individuals with ESAs continue to face barriers that compromise their stability and access to housing. Due to sub regulation changes by HUD on September 17th, 2025, which reduces clarity on this issue, it is even more critical to provide education to landlords and tenants regarding ESAs.

Recommendations:

1. Expand collaboration with OBH, Shalom House, Preble Street, MaineHousing, HUB coordinators and other housing authorities to educate landlords on the rights of tenants with ESAs.
2. Send educational materials to landlords with other notices/mail that is received by landlords on an annual or other recurring basis.
3. Improve public access to information about ESAs for peers, including their rights when it comes to housing. For example, we strongly recommend that OBH connect with MaineCare to add this information to the member handbook.
4. Within collaboration and education efforts, include ideas and strategies for providing information to healthcare providers on legal rights to include with letters of medical necessity for an ESA.

Expected Outcomes:

With these implementations, the public, including landlords and peers, would be better educated on the laws relating to ESAs. Peers would have better success finding long-term housing that would support their recovery. Additionally, landlords would be more likely to be



in compliance with federal and state requirements, avoiding unnecessary need for legal intervention.

References:

[Service and Assistance Animals in Maine: What's the difference, and what are my rights?](#)

[The power of support from companion animals for people living with mental health problems: a systematic review and narrative synthesis of the evidence](#)

[Laws and Ethics Related to Emotional Support Animals](#)

[Housing Service Animal Brochure](#)
