

Board of Social Work

Guidance on Emotional Support Animals

Licensees who are asked by clients to write letters or otherwise advocate for clients' use of emotional support animals, therapy animals, or other animal-assisted accommodations are advised to consider whether the licensee has relevant training and/or experience to support such advocacy.

Licensees are also advised to consider the plan for treatment, appropriate documentation, and the justification for their advocacy, based on clinical reasons.

Sections of the standards of practice for licensed clinical social workers that may be applicable include, but are not limited to, guidance to:

18VAC140-20-150 B.1. Be able to justify all services rendered to or on behalf of clients as necessary for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes.

18VAC140-20-150 B.3. Practice only within the competency areas for which they are qualified by education and experience.

18VAC140-20-150 B.5. Neither accept nor give commissions, rebates, or other forms of remuneration for referral of clients for professional services.

18VAC140-20-150 B.7. Inform clients of potential risks and benefits of services and the limitations on confidentiality and ensure that clients have provided informed written consent to treatment.

18VAC140-20-150 C.1. Maintain written or electronic clinical records for each client to include identifying information and assessment that substantiates diagnosis and treatment plans. Each record shall include a diagnosis and treatment plan, progress notes for each case activity, information received from all collaborative contacts and the treatment implications of that information, and the termination process and summary.