



Counselor, Social Worker & Marriage and Family Therapist Board

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To: CSWMFT Board Licensees and Stakeholders

From: CSWMFT Board

Re: Guidance Regarding Letters of Support for Emotional Support and Service Animals

Date: 9-19-2019

Licensees of the CSWMFT Board are increasingly being asked by clients provide letters of support stating the client requires an emotional support animal (ESA) or service animal. Often, licensees are being asked to provide such letters when no therapeutic relationship exists between the person requesting the letter and the licensee. The Board recognizes that ESAs can, when used appropriately, be an important part of ensuring the mental and emotional health of certain persons; service animals are also an important part of ensuring the health and independence of many persons with disabilities or mental and emotional disorders.

CSWMFT Board licensees should not provide letters of support for ESAs or service animals unless they have education, training, and experience in assessing clients to determine the need for an ESA or service animal. Such training and experience should include understanding the needs of the human client as well as the needs and capacity of the proposed ESA or service animal. Licensees should ensure they have considered the potential risks and liability associated with providing letters of support. In providing a letter of support, the licensee must rely upon an assessment and/or diagnosis completed face to face with the client in accordance with Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 4757. Licensees can utilize an assessment or diagnosis completed by a licensed professional with a scope of practice appropriate in completing such an assessment or rendering such a diagnosis. However, it is the responsibility of the licensee to verify the allied licensed professional has the education, training, and experience to assess a client for an ESA or service animal. Relying upon disclosures by the client that are not supported with additional evaluation and assessment by the CSWMFT licensee or allied professional could result in discipline. Board licensees who are not independently licensed must be supervised in accordance with ORC 4757 when assessing clients for an ESA.