

380.1 THERAPY DOGS IN SCHOOLS

The Board of Education supports the use of therapy dogs by school personnel or other qualified individuals (hereinafter referred to as “handler”) for the benefit of its students, subject to the conditions of this policy.

A “therapy dog,” as defined by this policy, is a dog that has been individually trained and certified to work with its handler to provide emotional support, well-being, or comfort to school district students. Therapy dogs are the personal property of the handler and are not owned by the District. Therapy dogs are not “service animals” as defined within the Americans with Disabilities Act. The use of service animals in the schools is governed by District Policy. Therapy dogs are meant to help all students and are not specifically identified as support for those students with documented disabilities.

Therapy Dog Standards and Requirements

The following requirements must be satisfied before a therapy dog will be allowed in school buildings or on school grounds:

1. **Submission of Written Request.** A handler wishing to bring a therapy dog to school must submit their written request to a principal or designated building administrator. Prior approval must be secured before the animal may be presented. The request must be renewed each school year, or whenever a different therapy dog will be used.
2. **Training, Registration and Identification.** The therapy dog must be at least one year old, registered as a therapy dog pursuant to the list below, and wear appropriate identification signifying it as a therapy dog at all times.

Only therapy dogs that hold the current title of American Kennel Club (AKC) Therapy Dog or that are registered/certified by one of the national therapy dog organizations certified by the AKC will be approved. Information on certified organizations can be found on the American Kennel Club website. Other entities not listed on the AKC website may be researched and vetted for approval by the Superintendent or his/her designee. This approval should be sought prior to therapy dogs from those entities being used in schools.

All certificates of registration must be submitted at the time of the request to bring a therapy dog to school. The certifications must remain current at all times.

3. **Pet License.** The therapy dog must be properly licensed in the county in which they are kept. They must wear their license identification tag at all times. The handler must submit proof of current licensure from the local licensing authority at the time of the request to bring a therapy dog to school.
4. **Health and Safety.** The therapy dog must be clean, well groomed, in good health, housebroken, and immunized against diseases common to dogs. Proof of the therapy dog’s current vaccinations and immunizations from a licensed veterinarian must be submitted at the time of the request to bring a therapy dog to school.

The therapy dog must not pose a health or safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school. Health risks include allergies. If any student or school employee assigned to a classroom

in which a therapy dog is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the therapy dog, the handler of the animal will be required to remove the animal to an alternative location designated by an administrator if such location is available.

5. Proof of Insurance and Liability. The handler of a therapy dog is solely responsible and liable for any damage to school property or injury to personnel, students, or others caused by the therapy dog. The handler must submit a copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on school property.
6. Behavior Expectations and Control. Therapy dogs must be well behaved and have a temperament that is suitable for interaction with students and others in a public school. The therapy dog should not display any behavior infringing on the rights of others or disrupting the educational process, including sniffing, begging, whining, growling, barking, wandering, jumping or any other undesirable behavior. When there is a difference between their governing therapy organization or the school system policy/procedure, the handler must abide by the more stringent rules.

A therapy dog must be under the control of the handler through the use of a 4-foot leash or other tether. The handler shall only allow the therapy dog to be in areas in school buildings or on school property that are authorized by school administrators.

7. Supervision and Care of Therapy Dogs. The handler is solely responsible for the supervision and care of the therapy dog, including any feeding, exercising, and clean up while the animal is in a school building or on school property. The school district is not responsible for providing any care, supervision, or assistance for a therapy dog.

Even if the above requirements are met, the District reserves the right to deny the use of a therapy dog in the schools.

Exclusion or Removal of a Therapy Dog from School Property

The goal of the presence of a therapy dog is to positively enrich the learning environment. Any deviation from this will result in removal of the therapy dog from school property. A therapy dog may be excluded from school property and buildings if a school administrator determines that:

- a. A handler does not have control of the therapy dog;
- b. The therapy dog is not housebroken;
- c. The therapy dog presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school; or
- d. The dog's presence otherwise interferes with the educational process.

CROSS REF: 380 – Animals in the School

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