

THERAPY DOGS

A. General Policy.

The District recognizes that specially trained therapy dogs can provide educational benefits for District students. The School Board authorizes the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee to allow appropriate staff to make a therapy dog available to students during the school day only as provided in this policy.

This policy is not intended to, and does not, allow students, parents, or staff to bring emotional support or comfort animals onto District property. Individuals who bring onto District property an animal that does not meet the definition of a service animal under policy IMGA or that has not been approved under this policy or Board policy IMG, shall be asked to remove the animal from District property. Repeated violations may result in disciplinary or legal action.

B. Definitions.

Service animals. See Board policy IMGA.

Therapy dog: A dog that has graduated from an assistance dog training program affiliated with Alliance of Therapy Dogs, Therapy Dogs International, or a similar nonprofit organization that adheres to the highest training standards. Such a graduate dog has been trained specifically for the purpose of providing emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship. Therapy dogs are the personal property of a District employee or volunteer and are not owned by the District. Therapy dogs do NOT meet the definition of "service animals" under Board policy IMGA or the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Therapy dog handler: An employee of the school district or volunteer who has received training and passed an evaluation from Alliance of Therapy Dogs, Therapy Dogs International, or a similar nonprofit organization for handling a specific therapy dog and who will be overseeing care of that specific therapy dog for the entire time the dog is on District property.

C. Minimum Standards Required for the Presence of a Therapy Dog.

1. No therapy dog will be permitted in school buildings or on school grounds during the school day unless and until prior approval has been given by the Superintendent/designee.

2. District employees will not receive any additional pay, stipend, or compensation for providing the therapy dog or for being the handler and/or the owner of the therapy dog.
3. Supervision and care of the approved therapy dog is solely the responsibility of the therapy dog handler(s) and the District staff who request approval for a therapy dog.
4. The therapy dog handler will assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to District property or injury to District staff, students, or others while the therapy dog is on District property.
5. The therapy dog handler must maintain an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on District property.
6. Approved therapy dogs must be clean, well-groomed, in good health, housebroken, and be current on all vaccinations and immunizations.
7. The therapy dog shall display appropriate identification indicating it is a therapy dog at all times while on District property.
8. The therapy dog shall be under the control of the therapy dog handler(s) at all times, which requires the therapy dog to be attached to the therapy dog handler by means of a leash or harness whenever the therapy dog is on District property and outside of the approved location.
9. The owner/handler shall only allow the therapy dog to be in areas of the school building and grounds that are authorized by the Principal.
10. A student shall not schedule or attend a visit with the therapy dog until the student's parent/guardian, or the student if over eighteen (18) years of age, provides written authorization for the student to use the services of a therapy dog.
11. All parents/guardians, students, and staff members will be made aware of the presence of a therapy dog in school.
12. When a parent/guardian opts their child out of interacting with the therapy dog, the dog handler or administrator will contact the parent/guardian to confirm receipt of this request.
13. In the event of an unanticipated interaction between the therapy dog and a child whose parent/guardian has opted them out of interactions, the handler will notify the school principal. The principal or their designee will contact the parent within 24 hours.

D. **Aggressive or Defensive Behavior.**

The building Principal is to receive a verbal report within fifteen (15) minutes of any act of aggressive - including vocalizations such as growling - or defensive behavior by a therapy dog toward a human or any aggressive or inappropriate behavior by a student toward a therapy dog. A full written incident report shall be submitted to both the building Principal and the Superintendent, or designee, before the close of the following school day.

An act of aggressive or defensive behavior by a therapy dog shall result in:

1. An immediate end of the current visit with the therapy dog;
2. The prohibition of any further interactions between the therapy dog and students for the remainder of the school day; and
3. Exclusion of the therapy dog from District property until the superintendent, or designee, completes an investigation and authorizes the therapy dog's return.

E. **Allergic Reactions.**

If a student has a known allergy to the therapy dog, the student shall not have any visits with the therapy dog without the specific written authorization of the student's parent/guardian, or the student if over eighteen (18) years of age.

If a student demonstrates symptoms of an allergic reaction during or after a visit or close interaction with the therapy dog, the student's parent/guardian shall receive written notification of the possibility of their student's allergy and that the student shall not have any future visits with the therapy dog.

If other students in the same classroom demonstrate symptoms of an allergic reaction following a student's return to class after a visit with the therapy dog, no further visit with the therapy dog shall be scheduled for any student in that classroom and the parents of any student who demonstrated symptoms of an allergic reaction shall receive written notification of their student's possible allergy.

F. **Therapy Dog Proposal**

1. **Requirements.** Any individual seeking to bring a therapy dog into a school building or onto other School District property during the school day shall submit a written proposal to the Superintendent/designee addressing each of the following areas:
 - a. **Location Information.** The location for the therapy dog to be kept when the therapy dog is on campus must meet all of the following conditions:
 - i. Appropriate access to the outdoors to permit the therapy dog to enter and exit the building without using - or with minimal usage of - the building's interior hallways;

- ii. Ample space away from intake for the building or room ventilation system or an independent ventilation system;
- iii. Non-porous surfaces, including carpet-free floors, for easy hair removal, cleaning, and sanitation.

b. Appropriateness of Dogs and of Certification Providers.

- i. The certification the proposed therapy dog has received, including the training required to receive the certification;
- ii. The credentials of the certification providers;
- iii. Satisfactory evidence of appropriate temperament of the proposed therapy dog (e.g., AKC Temperament Test or other temperance evaluation(s));
- iv. The credentials of the temperance evaluator(s);
- v. Proof from a veterinarian demonstrating the therapy dog is current on all vaccinations, has no illness present that would preclude the dog from participating as a therapy dog in a school, and no history of aggressive behavior known.

c. Therapy Dog Handler.

- i. The individual(s) who will be responsible for handling the therapy dog;
- ii. Training obtained by the proposed handler(s);
- iii. The credentials of the providers of the handler's training;
- iv. Proposed schedule for the handler(s) to provide necessary care for the therapy dog, including exercise, feeding, watering, bodily functions, and any cleanup resulting from caring for the dog; and
- v. Proof of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on District property.

d. Students.

- i. The set(s) of students whom the therapy dog is intended to serve and/or to whom the dog will be available;
- ii. Proposed training to be provided to students on the appropriate behavior and treatment of the therapy dog;

- iii. Consequences for inappropriate treatment of the therapy dog;
- iv. The anticipated goals for and intended uses of the therapy dog.

2. **Administrative Discretion.** The Superintendent/designee may reject the proposal if:

- a. The proposal does not include sufficient information regarding each of the areas identified in Section F.1, above, or does not otherwise meet the requirements of this policy;
- b. The Superintendent/designee does not perceive any educational benefit to be achieved based on the information contained in the proposal;
- c. The Superintendent/designee believes that the time required to meet the needs of the therapy dog is inconsistent with the assigned duties of the school employee, either proposed as the therapy dog's handler or in whose class/activity the therapy dog would be present; or
- d. The proposal is otherwise inconsistent with the needs of the school or school building.

3. **Approval.** The approval of a proposal must be in writing with the proposal attached, and with any additional requirements or modifications imposed by the Superintendent/designee. The written approval is required before the therapy dog may be present in school, or on School District property, during the school day.

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