

**Franklin Public Schools  
Franklin, Massachusetts 02038**

# Action Required

---

**Subject:** Policy 1st Read

**Date:** May 26, 2026

**Dept** SC

---

**Reason:** Required Vote

**Enclosure** yes

**Background**

Policy - First Reading

I recommend moving policy IMGB - Therapy/Emotional Support Dogs to a second reading as discussed.

**Action Requested of the School Committee:**

I recommend approval.

Majority vote of the School Committee is required.

## **Vote Tabulator**

D. Callaghan:	Y / N	S. Karunakaran:	Y / N
Al Charles :	Y / N	N. Mausolf:	Y / N
P. Griffith:	Y / N	R. O'Sullivan:	Y / N
R. Hansen:	Y / N	Action:	

# IMGBID - Therapy/Emotional Support Dogs

Emotional support dogs, which can be called therapy dogs, comfort dogs, or social-emotional assistance dogs and are not service animals as defined by Massachusetts law or Title II or Title III of the American Disabilities Act (ADA). This policy addresses these non-service dogs who provide companionship, comfort and affection and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, and certain phobias, but do not have special training to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. This policy also addresses emotional support dogs who provide people with therapeutic contact, to improve their physical, social, emotional, and/or cognitive functioning. ~~Service dogs are not restricted to the limitations in this policy. The ADA permits a student with a disability who uses a service animal to bring the animal to school and the district's Service Animal Policy applies to service animals.~~

An emotional support dog has been trained, evaluated, and registered/certified as a therapy dog, is owned by a school staff member, and is handled by school staff who have been trained, evaluated, and registered/certified to handle this specific therapy dog. For example, a classroom teacher may own a therapy dog and be its primary handler; however, a school adjustment counselor in the same school building also may be trained to handle the classroom teacher's emotional support/therapy dog. Other emotional support animals, including requests for Emotional Support Dogs from individuals, are not permitted in the Franklin Public Schools.

~~The ADA permits a student with a disability who uses a service animal to bring the animal to school and the district's Service Animal Policy, IHBB, applies to service animals.~~

An Emotional Support Dog may only be brought into a Franklin Public School or any of its affiliated programs or facilities under the direction of the School Principal or designee and with the permission of the Superintendent or their designee for Instructional Purposes. Instructional purposes are defined as "having animals present to support the learning strategies of a specific educational program **and in alignment with the district and school mission**".

All requests shall be submitted ~~in writing to the Superintendent or designee~~ ~~to the Superintendent in writing~~. The Superintendent or designee has **sole discretion** to approve or deny each individual request and may rescind such approval at any time. The Superintendent or designee also has the sole discretion to approve each dog's handler(s) and may rescind such approval at any time. ~~The Superintendent or their designee reserve the right to request documentation supporting all requests. Such documentation may include documentation from a veterinarian that the Emotional Support Dog is in good health and up-to-date on all vaccinations as required by local ordinances and regulations.~~

If a request for an Emotional Support Dog is granted by the Superintendent or their designee, the owner of the Emotional Support Dog is responsible for ensuring that the Emotional Support Dog does not unduly interfere

with school activities and is solely responsible for any damage to persons or school property caused by the Emotional Support Dog.

**Required Documentation** - Before a dog may be approved for entry onto school grounds, the following documentation must be submitted to the Superintendent or designee. Approval must be received **prior** to the dog attending school activities or events or being present on school property.

1. Evidence that any Emotional Support dog has received an Emotional Support Dog certification from a national therapy dog organization. Exceptions may be made for Emotional Support Dog(s) undergoing training by the Franklin Police Department to serve as a therapy dog for the benefit of the schools.
2. Proof that the handler(s) have been trained, evaluated, and registered/certified to handle the specific emotional support/therapy dog.
3. Evidence from a veterinarian that the dog is in good health and has been immunized against diseases common to dogs, such as but not limited to rabies.
4. Appropriate licensure from a local dog licensing authority.
5. Affirmation that the dog has regular flea prevention treatment and will be well-groomed while on school property or at school activities/events.
6. Proof of an insurance policy providing liability coverage for the use of the emotional support/therapy dog on school grounds and naming Franklin Public Schools as an additional insured.
7. Statement that the handler is responsible for any damages caused by their Emotional Support Dog animal.

### **Rules While on School Grounds** ~~PROTOCOL FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT DOG~~

~~At the request of the school principal or designee, a handler will apply to bring an emotional support dog onto the Franklin Public Schools property or to Franklin Public Schools activities or events in writing. Approval must be received prior to the dog attending school activities or events or being present on school property.~~

~~An Emotional Support Dog may only be brought into a Franklin Public School or any of its affiliated programs or facilities at the sole discretion of the Superintendent or his or her designee.~~

~~The handler must provide the following documentation prior to receiving approval:~~

~~Evidence from a veterinarian of the dog being up to date with required vaccinations, including rabies and receiving a clean bill of health.~~

~~Appropriate licensure from a local dog licensing authority.~~

~~Affirmation that the dog has regular flea prevention treatment and will be well-groomed while on school property or at school activities/events.~~

~~Evidence that the owner has liability insurance covering any damages or injuries caused by the dog's presence at school and/or school activities and events.~~

~~Statement that the handler is responsible for any damages caused by their Emotional Support Dog animal.~~

~~Evidence that any Emotional Support dog has received an Emotional Support Dog certification from a national therapy dog organization. Exceptions may be made for Emotional Support Dog(s) undergoing training by the Franklin Police Department to serve as a therapy dog for the benefit of the schools.~~

1. The Emotional Support Dog must be obedient, calm, and ~~as well as~~ affectionate and friendly to strangers.
2. The Emotional Support Dog will only be permitted in authorized areas within and outside of the school building.
3. When using an Emotional Support Dog in a school setting, the dog must always be under control of the handler with either a harness or a leash no longer than four feet, unless holding such a leash would interfere with the Emotional Support Dog's safe, effective performance of its work or tasks. The handler shall maintain control of the Emotional Support Dog at all times and shall not tether the Emotional Support Dog to any individual or object. The school is not responsible for providing the handler or for handling the dog.
4. The handler and Emotional Support Dog will wear appropriate identification identifying them as a registered handler and Emotional Support Dog.
5. Volunteer handlers shall sign themselves and their Emotional Support Dog in upon arrival at any school and shall sign both out on departure from the building. Handlers who are Franklin School Resource Officers shall sign their Emotional Support Dog in upon arrival and sign him/her out on their departure.
6. The handler ~~fee~~ shall not borrow money or personal items, or receive any personal gratuity, gift, or tip, such as money or jewelry from staff or students in the district.
7. The handlers of an Emotional Support Dog are responsible for the supervision and care of the animal while on school property including feeding, exercising, and cleaning up after the animal.
8. The School Principal, ~~or their designee~~, will notify families, students, and staff whenever an Emotional Support Dog will be present on school property or at school activities and events. Families, students, and staff will have the opportunity to express their wish to avoid the Emotional Support Dog.
9. The handler shall remove the Emotional Support Dog to a separate area as designated by the school administrator in such instances where any student or school employee who suffers dog allergies or aversions is present in an office, hallway, or classroom. Students who are unable to participate in class activities will be provided with an alternative learning experience or be provided with accommodations, as appropriate.
10. The handler shall confirm whether or not there will be any other Emotional Support Dog(s) on site prior to scheduling any visit with an Emotional Support Dog and shall take steps with appropriate staff to ensure that the dogs do not engage inappropriately while on school property. When multiple Emotional Support Dogs are engaged in a planned activity on school district property, the handlers shall ensure that the dogs have an opportunity to greet each other prior to entering the school building. Once inside the building, the handlers shall ensure that the dogs are each on a four-foot leash, given work space at least eight feet from each other, and are given no opportunity for contact or socialization with each other while working.
11. ~~The Superintendent or his/her designee may withdraw approval for an Emotional Support Dog at any time at his/her sole discretion.~~

Exceptions to these provisions may be made by the Superintendent for the inclusion of the Franklin Police Department's Emotional Support Dog in school-related activities and events.

CROSS REF: IHBB – SERVICE ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

Adopted by School Committee: 5/28/19

#### Legal References

<https://www.ada.gov/>

US Code of Federal Regulations: USC 35.136 & 36.302