

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Code</i>
	SERVICE ANIMALS (GUIDE OR ASSISTANCE DOGS) AND THERAPY ANIMALS	IMG

HOLLISTON

The Holliston Public Schools (HPS) does not permit discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including those who require the assistance of a service animal. HPS complies with Massachusetts and federal laws concerning the rights of persons with guide or assistance animals.. HPS supports the use of therapy animals to provide educational and social/emotional support for students, faculty, and staff. The safety and wellbeing of our students, faculty, and staff shall be the primary consideration. Therefore, the presence of service animals and therapy animals on school premises, any school-related setting, and/or district transportation is allowed in accordance with law and with this policy and as authorized by the Superintendent. This policy is intended to provide guidance for the safe and effective use of service and therapy animals in schools, while respecting the needs of others with regard to allergies and other concerns.

For purposes of this policy, a “service animal includes any dog that has been individually trained and permitted to do the work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.” The regulations further state that “a public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with the disability.”

For the purpose of this policy, a therapy animal is an animal that has been certified, along with its handlers, by a therapy organization. As such, the handler is responsible for the care and control of the therapy animal, and the therapy organization provides certification of and insurance for the therapy teams. Therapy animal visits are scheduled and approved by school administration with notice to students and families. Such therapy animal visits will be provided in a non-classroom/instructional setting, where students and staff can opt into such visits and allows those with allergies or fear of animals to not participate without consequence. All therapy animal visits require appropriate planning and mitigations to minimize allergen exposure, such as avoiding visits to non-carpeted areas or to rooms with upholstered furniture.

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that individuals with disabilities cannot perform themselves. Service animals are not pets. There are several kinds of service animals that assist individuals with disabilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, animals that:

- * assist individuals who are blind or have severe sight impairments as “seeing eye dogs” or “guide dogs;”
- * alert individuals with hearing impairments to sounds;
- * pull wheelchairs or carry and pick-up items for individuals with mobility impairments; and
- * assist mobility-impaired individuals with balance.

HPS shall not assume or take custody or control of, or responsibility for, any service or therapy animal or the care or feeding thereof. The owner/person having custody and control or handler of the animal shall be liable for any damage to persons, premises, property, or facilities caused by the service or therapy animal, including, but not limited to, clean up, stain removal, etc.

If, in the opinion of the school Principal or authorized designee, any service or therapy animal is not in the control of its owner/person having custody and control/handler, or if it is not housebroken, the service or therapy animal may be excluded from the school or program. The service or therapy animal can also be excluded if it presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school. The parent/guardian of the student having custody and control of the service animal will be required to remove the service animal from HPS premises immediately. The handler of the therapy animal will be required to remove the therapy animal from HPS premises immediately.

If any student or staff member assigned to the classroom in which a service animal is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the service animal, the person having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the service animal to a different location designated by the building principal or designee and an alternative plan will be developed with appropriate HPS staff. Such plan could include the reassignment of the person having custody and control of the service animal to a different classroom. This will also apply if an individual on school transportation suffers an allergic reaction to the service animal. In this case, an alternate plan will be developed in coordination with appropriate school, HPS, and transportation staff, including the involvement of the parents/guardian of the student.

When a student will be accompanied by a service animal at school or in other HPS facilities on a regular basis, such staff member or such student's parents/guardian, as well as the service animal's owner and any other person who will have custody and control of the service animal will be required to sign a document stating that they have read and understood the foregoing.

The Superintendent or his/her designee shall be responsible for developing procedures to accommodate a student's use of a service animal in HPS facilities and on school transportation vehicles.

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Legal References:	Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act; 28 CFR 35 – Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services
Policy Cross Reference:	
Procedure Reference:	