

SERVICE ANIMALS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A. SERVICE ANIMALS

Persons with disabilities have the same right as those without disabilities to the use and enjoyment of Alexandria City Public Schools facilities. As required by federal and state law, an individual with a disability is permitted to be accompanied by his/her service animal on school property, subject to the conditions of this policy.

Although Regulation JHC-R addresses procedures for animals in schools generally, this policy governs access for service animals on school property.

A “service animal” means a dog or miniature horse that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. (See, however, Section D regarding miniature horses.) The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability or necessary to mitigate the effects of a disability.

School officials can ask the owner or handler of an animal whether the animal is required because of a disability and what work or task the animal has been trained to do unless the answers to these inquiries are readily apparent. School officials may not ask about the nature or extent of a person’s disability and may not require documentary proof of certification or licensing as a service animal.

B. REQUIREMENTS FOR SERVICE ANIMALS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY ON A CONTINUING BASIS

Request: A person who wants to be accompanied by his/her service animal on a continuing basis must make a prior written request of the school’s principal if the service animal will come onto school property. For all other school division facilities, such requests should be made to the Superintendent. When a service animal accompanies a student as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan accommodation or related service, the request may be reviewed annually through the IEP or 504 Plan renewal process. When a service animal accompanies a school division employee, this request may be updated during the employee’s annual review.

Vaccination: Service animals must be immunized annually against diseases common to that type of animal, and the school principal may request copies of the immunization documentation. When a service animal accompanies a student as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan accommodation or related service, it may be reviewed annually through the IEP or 504 Plan renewal process. When a service animal accompanies a school division employee, this documentation may be updated during the employee’s annual review.

Health: The service animal must be in good health. The owner or handler of the animal must submit documentation to the school principal each school year from a licensed veterinarian of the

following: a current veterinary health certificate and proof of the service animal's current vaccinations and immunizations. When a service animal accompanies a student as an IEP accommodation, the documentation may be submitted at the student's annual IEP meeting.

Control: A service animal must be under the control of its handler at all times. The service animal must have a harness, backpack, vest identifying the dog as a trained service dog, leash, or other tether unless either the handler is unable because of a disability to use a harness, backpack, vest, leash, or other tether, or the use of a harness, backpack, vest, leash, or other tether would interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the service animal must be otherwise under the handler's control.

The Code of Virginia requires the following identifiers for service dogs:

- for students with disabilities with visual impairment, including blindness: a harness.
- for students with disabilities with deafness or hearing impairment: a blaze orange leash.
- for students with disabilities with mobility impairment: harness, backpack, or vest identifying the dog as a trained dog.

C. SERVICE DOGS IN TRAINING

Experienced trainers of service animals may be accompanied on school property by a dog that is in training to become a service animal. The trainer must make a prior written request of the school's principal if the service animal in training will come into a school, and to the Superintendent for all other locations. In addition, the trainer must comply with the provisions of Policies KK and KGB.

The dog must be at least six months of age. Trainers must wear a jacket identifying the organization to which they belong. Persons conducting continuing training of a service animal may be accompanied by a service animal while on school property for the purpose of school business. A person who is part of a three-unit service dog team may be accompanied by a service dog while on school property provided that the person is conducting continuing training of a service dog. A three-unit service dog team consists of a trained service dog, a person with a disability, and a person who is an adult and who has been trained to handle the service dog. The dogs may accompany these persons while on school property for school purposes. All members of the service dog team must comply with the provisions of policies KK and KGB.

Identifiers for Service Dogs

The training cannot disrupt or interfere with a school's educational process. Although it is expected that training would not normally take place in the classroom during instructional time, the trainer may be present during normal class time when doing continuing training.

All requirements of this policy apply to service animals, such as health certificates, annual written requests, and supervision, care and damages, also apply to dogs in training.

D. MINIATURE HORSES

Alexandria City Public Schools will make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the miniature horse has been individually trained to do work, perform tasks, or provide stability for the benefit of the individual with a disability. In determining whether reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures can be made to allow a miniature horse into a specific facility, the school division must consider the following factors:

1. The type, size, and weight of the miniature horse and whether the facility can accommodate these features;
2. Whether the handler has sufficient control of the miniature horse;
3. Whether the miniature horse is housebroken; and
4. Whether the miniature horse's presence in a specific facility compromises legitimate safety requirements that are necessary for safe operation.

All additional requirements outlined in this policy, which apply to service animals, shall apply to miniature horses.

E. EXTRA CHARGES

The owner or handler of a service animal shall not be required to pay an admission fee or a charge for the animal to attend events for which a fee is charged.

F. SUPERVISION AND CARE OF SERVICE ANIMALS

The owner or handler of a service animal is responsible for the supervision and care of the animal, including any feeding, exercising, and clean up.

G. DAMAGES TO SCHOOL PROPERTY AND INJURIES

The owner or handler of a service animal is solely responsible for any damage to school property or injury to personnel, students, or others caused by the animal.

H. REMOVAL OF SERVICE ANIMALS FROM SCHOOL PROPERTY

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access to people using service animals. When a person who is allergic to a service animal and a person who uses a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, they should both be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room or to different rooms within the facility. A school administrator may only require an individual with a disability to remove a service animal from school property under the following circumstances:

1. The animal is out of control and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control it;

2. The animal is not housebroken;
3. The presence of the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
or
4. The presence of an animal would require a fundamental alteration to the service, program, or activity of the school division.

If the service animal is removed, the individual with a disability shall be provided with the opportunity to participate in the service, program, or activity without the service animal with other accommodations.

I. DENIAL OF ACCESS AND GRIEVANCE

If a school official denies a request for access of a service animal or a dog in training, the individual with the disability or parent or guardian can file a written grievance with the school division's Section 504 Coordinator.

J. DEFINITIONS

“Service animal” means a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. (See, however, Section D regarding miniature horses.) The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability.

“Work or tasks” performed by a service animal must be directly related to the handler's disability. Examples include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors.

“Hearing dog” means a dog trained to alert its owner by touch to sounds of danger and sounds to which the owner should respond.

“Mobility impaired” student means one who is unable to move about without the aid of crutches, a wheelchair or any other form of support or because of limited functional ability to ambulate, climb, descend, sit, rise or perform any related function.

“Service animal” means any dog (or trained miniature horse) that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability.

“Three-unit service dog team” means a team consisting of a trained service dog, a person with a disability, and a person who is an adult and who has been trained to handle the service dog.

Adopted: October 2, 2008
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Legal Refs.: Americans with Disabilities Act, Amendments Act of 2008;
implementing regulations at 28 C.F.R. §§ 35.104; 36.104

Virginians with Disabilities Act, Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, [§ 51.5-44](#)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;
implementing regulations at 34 CFR Part 300

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended

Cross Refs.:	DJG	Vendor Relations
	GB	Equal Employment Opportunity/Nondiscrimination
	JB	Equal Educational Opportunities/Nondiscrimination
	JBA	Section 504 Hearing Procedures
	JFHA/GBA	Sexual Harassment/Harassment Based on Race, National Origin, Disability and Religion
	JHC-R	Animals in Schools
	KK	School Visitors
	KGB	Public Conduct on School Property
	KN	Sex Offender Registry Notification
	KNA	Violent Sex Offenders on School Property