

## **SUBJECT: THERAPY DOGS**

The District supports the use of therapy dogs in their schools for the benefit (examples: stress relief, test anxiety, reading with elementary school children) of its students subject to the conditions of this policy.

A “therapy dog” is a dog that has been individually trained and certified to work with its Handler to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship to school district students and staff. Therapy dogs are not “service animals” as that term is used in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The therapy dog must be well-behaved and have a **patient, confident, and gentle** temperament that is suitable for interaction with students, staff and others in a public school. Therapy dogs are personal property of the Handler and are not owned by the school district. The District will work with outside agencies such as, but not limited to, RocDog.

### **Therapy Dog Standards and Procedures**

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

- **Initiation of Service:** A District Administrator will initiate contact with an approved therapy dog provider. The written request must include the therapy dog’s current health/vaccination records, the therapy dog’s license, the Handler’s insurance policy covering the therapy dog’s activities within the public school setting, the therapy dog’s certification/registration to engage in therapy dog activities from a professional accrediting organization, the therapy dog’s Canine Good Citizen Certification from the American Kennel Club, and the therapy dog’s proposed role in interacting with students. The request must be renewed each school year or whenever a different therapy dog will be used. Approval may be rescinded at any time at the discretion of the Principal or Superintendent. A therapy dog may only interact with staff or students whose parents/guardians have provided informed written consent for their children to engage in such activities with the therapy dog.
- **Training and Certification:** The provider must submit the American Kennel Club’s Good Citizen Certification or its equivalent as determined by the Superintendent or designee. Therapy dogs must also be certified for therapy duties from an accredited therapy dog organization. Their certifications must remain current at all times.
- **Health and Vaccination:** The therapy dog must be clean, well groomed, in good health, housebroken and immunized against diseases common to dogs. The Handler must abide by current city, county, and state ordinances, laws, and/or regulations pertaining to licensing, vaccination, and other requirements for animals. It is the Handler’s responsibility to know and understand these ordinances, laws, and regulations. The Handler must submit proof of compliance with these ordinances, laws, and regulations upon requesting to bring a therapy dog to school.
- **Control:** A therapy dog must be under control of the Handler through the use of a leash or other tether.
- **Identification:** The therapy dog must have appropriate identification identifying it as a therapy dog.

**SUBJECT: THERAPY DOGS (CONT'D)**

- **No Disruption:** The therapy dog must not disrupt the educational process by barking, seeking attention, or any other behavior.
- **Health and Safety:** The therapy dog must not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school.
- **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 Handler is required to clean up and properly dispose of the animal's waste in a safe and sanitary manner. The Handler must always carry sufficient equipment to clean up the animal's waste. The school district is not responsible for providing any care, supervision, or assistance for a therapy dog. This includes not being responsible for removing animal during emergency evacuation for events such as a fire alarm.
- **District Policies and Procedures:** The Handler must abide by all equally applicable District policies such as assuring that the animal does not unduly interfere with the routine activities of the District.
- **Authorized Area(s):** The Handler shall only allow the therapy dog to be in areas in school buildings or on school property that are authorized by school district administrators.
- **Insurance:** The Agency must submit a copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the Therapy dog while on school property.
- **Volunteer Handlers and certified therapy dogs from an accredited agency will be allowed by approval of the building or grade level principal. Background checks, health, and vaccine records, etc. are verified by the agency for the Handlers and their dogs.**
- **Additional Information Needed From Agency: Owner/Handler Information, Therapy Dog Information, Required Therapy Dog Certification**

**Exclusion or Removal from School**

A therapy dog may be excluded from school property and buildings if a school administrator determines that:

1. The Handler does not have control of the therapy dog.
2. The therapy dog is not house broken.
3. The therapy dog does not possess the required training/certification for performing therapy dog duties.
4. The therapy dog poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others or causes substantial damage to the property of others.
5. The therapy dog's presence results in a fundamental alteration of a District program, service, or activity.
6. The therapy dog or its presence creates an unmanageable disturbance or interference with the District's operations.

**SUBJECT: THERAPY DOGS (CONT'D)**

7. The Handler does not comply with the Handler's responsibilities set forth in this Policy.

The Handler shall be required to remove the therapy dog from school premises immediately upon such a determination.

**Allergic Reactions/Aversions**

The Handler shall remove the therapy dog to a separate area as designated by school administrator in instances where the therapy dog is in the presence of any student, school employee, or other individual on school grounds who suffer from dog allergies or aversions.

**Damages to School Property and Injuries**

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.

Adopted: February 28, 2023