

Article VII - Facilities and Operations

Section 19 - Animals on School Property

Introduction

The Board of Education recognizes that there are many occasions when animals are present on District property and many reasons for those animals' presence. Animals are commonly utilized by teachers during classroom presentations and are often housed in classrooms and other locations on campus. Additionally, employees, students, parents, vendors, and other members of the public may be accompanied at school by a service or therapy animal in accordance with Federal and State law and this policy.

This policy applies to all animals on District property, including service and therapy animals. **This policy is not intended to, and does not, allow students, parents/guardians, staff, or others to bring emotional support dogs onto any District property.**

Definitions

- A. "Animal": Includes any living creature that is not a human being.
- B. "Service animal": Pursuant to 28 C.F.R. Section 36.104, "means any dog 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. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. Examples of work or tasks 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. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition."

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) also defines a miniature horse as an animal that can serve as a service animal, so long as the miniature horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with a disability. To better determine whether the Board must allow for the use of a miniature horse or make modifications to buildings, the Board should refer to Section 35.136 (c) through (i) of the ADA.

Vaccination, Licensing and/or Veterinary Requirements

Animals, including service and therapy animals, housed on or brought on to District property on a regular basis must meet every veterinary requirement set forth in State law and County regulation/ordinance, including but not limited to rabies vaccination or other inoculations required to be properly licensed.

Service Animals for Students

A service animal is permitted to accompany a student with a disability to whom the animal is assigned anywhere on the school campus where students are permitted to be.

A service animal is the personal property of the student and/or parents. The Board does not assume responsibility for training, daily care, healthcare, or supervision of service animals. The Board does not assume responsibility for personal injury or property damage arising out of or relating to the presence or use of service animals on District property or at District-sponsored events.

A service animal that meets the definitions set forth in the ADA and this policy shall be under the control of the student with a disability, or a separate handler if the student is unable to control the animal. A service animal shall have a harness, leash, or other tether, unless either the student with a disability is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash, or other tether, or the use of a harness, 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 student's control (e.g., voice control, signals, or other effective means), or under the control of a handler other than the student.

If the student with a disability is unable to control the service animal and another person serves as the animal's handler, that individual shall be treated as a volunteer.

Removing and/or Excluding a Student's Service Animal

If a service animal demonstrates that it is not under the control of the student or its handler, the Principal is responsible for documenting such behavior and for determining if and when the service animal is to be removed and/or excluded from school property.

Similarly, in instances when the service animal demonstrates that it is not housebroken, the Principal shall document such behavior and determine whether the service animal is to be removed and/or excluded from school property.

The Principal shall notify the Superintendent when a service animal is removed and/or excluded, and, immediately subsequent to such notification, document the reasons for the removal and/or exclusion.

The Principal's decision to remove and/or exclude a service animal from school property may be appealed in accordance with the complaint procedure set forth in [AG 18-1](#) - Section 504/ADA - Complaint and Due Process Procedures.

The procedures set forth in [AG 18-2](#) – Complaint Procedures for Nondiscrimination and Equal Educational Opportunity/Access are not intended to interfere with the rights of a student and their parents or an eligible student to pursue a complaint with the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

Eligibility of a Student's Service Animal for Transportation

A student with a disability shall be permitted to access School District transportation with their service animal. There may also be a need for the service animal's handler, if the handler is someone other than the student, to also access School District transportation.

When a service animal is going to ride on a school bus or other Board-owned or leased vehicle, the student and their parents, or eligible student, and the handler, if the handler is someone other than the student, shall meet with the Transportation Supervisor to discuss critical commands needed for daily interaction and emergency/evacuation, and to determine whether the service animal should be secured on bus/vehicle with a tether or harness.

At the discretion of the Transportation Supervisor, an orientation will take place for students and staff who will be riding the bus/vehicle with the service animal regarding the animal's functions and how students should interact with the animal.

The service animal shall board the bus by the steps with the student, not a lift, unless the student uses the lift to enter and exit the bus. The service animal must participate in bus evacuation drills with the student.

While the bus/vehicle is in motion, the service animal shall remain positioned on the floor, at the student's feet.

Situations that would cause cessation of transportation privileges for the service animal include:

- A. the student, or handler, is unable to control the service animal's behavior, which poses a threat to the health or safety of others; or
- B. the service animal urinates or defecates on the bus.

The student and their parents shall be informed of behaviors that could result in cessation of transportation privileges for the service animal, in writing, prior to the first day of transportation.

If it is necessary to suspend transportation privileges for the service animal for any of the above reasons, the decision may be appealed to the Transportation Supervisor.

Although transportation may be suspended for the service animal, it remains the District's responsibility to transport the student. Furthermore, unless the behavior that resulted in the service animal's removal from the bus is also documented during the school day, the service animal may still accompany the student in school.

Service Animals for Employees

In accordance with Section 504/ADA Prohibition Against Disability Discrimination in Employment, the Board provides qualified individuals with disabilities with reasonable accommodation(s). An employee with a disability may request authorization to use a service animal while on duty as such an accommodation. The request will be handled in accordance with the ADA-mandated interactive process and [employee form](#).

Service Animals for Parents, Vendors, Visitors, and Others

Individuals with disabilities who are accompanied by their service animals are permitted access to all areas of the District's facilities where members of the public, as participants in services, programs or activities, as vendors, or as invitees, are permitted to go. Individuals who will access any area of the District's facilities with their service animals should notify the Principal that their service animal will accompany them during their visit.

An individual with a disability who attends a school event will be permitted to be accompanied by their service animal.

Non-Service Animals in Schools and Elsewhere on District Property

Animals permitted in schools and elsewhere on District property shall be limited to those necessary to support specific curriculum-related projects and activities, those that provide assistance to a student or staff member due to a disability (e.g., seizure disorder), or those that serve as service animals as required by Federal and State law.

Taking into consideration that some animals can cause or exacerbate allergic reactions, spread bacterial infections, or cause damage and create a hazard if they escape from confinement, the Principal may permit non-service animals to be present in classrooms to support curriculum-related projects and activities only under the following conditions:

- A. the staff member seeking approval to have a non-service animal in their classroom shall:
 1. provide a current satisfactory health certificate or report of examination from a veterinarian for the animal;
 2. take precautions deemed necessary to protect the health and safety of students and other staff;
 3. provide that the animal is treated humanely, keeping it in a healthy condition and in appropriate housing (e.g., a cage or tank) that is properly cleaned and maintained; and
 4. keep the surrounding areas in a clean and sanitary condition at all times;
- B. Other staff members and parents of students in areas potentially affected by animals have been notified in writing and adjustments have been made to accommodate verified health-related or other concerns.

Except where required by law, the presence of a non-service animal shall be disallowed if documented health concerns of a student or staff member cannot be accommodated.

Use of Therapy Dogs in the District

The District recognizes that specially trained therapy dogs can provide educational and social-emotional, and benefits for District students and may allow such dogs to be used in schools, in accordance with this policy.

A “therapy dog” is a dog that has been individually trained and certified or registered to work with its handler to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship to District students. The dog must have a current therapy dog certificate with *West Michigan Therapy Dogs* or equivalent acceptable to the Principal and Superintendent. Therapy dogs are individually trained and certified/registered to provide appropriate interactions with students and others at school. The dog must be well behaved and have a temperament that is suitable for interaction with students and others in a public school.

A “handler” is an adult who is responsible for caring for and supervising the therapy dog, which includes toileting, feeding, grooming, and veterinary care. Students shall not act as handlers.

The District is not obligated to supervise or otherwise care for a therapy dog. Therapy dogs are the personal property of a District employee or volunteer. Therapy dogs are not owned by the District. They are also not emotional support dogs intended to provide comfort to a particular individual.

Therapy Dog Plan

District staff who wish to have therapy dogs made available to students shall submit a plan to the building principal. It must be resubmitted each year and any time a different therapy dog or handler will be used. The plan shall address all of the following topics:

1. The location for the therapy dog to be kept when the therapy dog is on campus is at the discretion of the building administrator. The building administrator may take into consideration the following conditions:
 - a. Direct access to the outdoors to permit the therapy dog to enter and exit the building without using the building’s interior hallways;
 - b. Free of an intake for the building ventilation system or an independent ventilation system; and
 - c. Non-porous surfaces, including carpet-free floors, for easy hair removal, cleaning, and sanitation.
2. The credentials of the proposed therapy dog and the organization that has certified them including:
 - a. Proof the proposed therapy dog has received appropriate certification;
 - b. The credentials of the certification providers;
 - c. Proof the proposed therapy dog is current on all vaccinations.
3. Plans for interaction between the proposed therapy dog and students, including:
 - a. The students the therapy dog is intended to serve;
 - b. The anticipated goals for and intended uses of the therapy dog;
 - c. Proposed instruction to be provided to students on the appropriate behavior and treatment of the therapy dog;
 - d. How the staff member will accommodate students who are allergic to the dog, fearful of the dog, or whose parents do not give permission for the student to interact with the dog.
4. Plans for care and supervision of the therapy dog, including:
 - a. The identity and credentials of the handler;
 - b. The credentials of the providers of the handler’s training;

- c. Proposed schedule for the handler to provide necessary care for the therapy dog, including exercise, feeding, watering, toileting, and any necessary cleanup; and
- d. Proof of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on District property.

The building principal may reject a proposal for any reason, and shall reject the proposal if:

- a. It does not meet the requirements of this policy;
- b. The building principal does not consider the benefit to outweigh the risks and costs;
- c. The building principal believes that the time required to care for the therapy dog is inconsistent with the assigned duties of the school employee/handler; or
- d. The proposal is otherwise inconsistent with the needs of the school.

The principal shall submit any proposal the principal desires to be approved to the Superintendent or their designee for final review. The Superintendent or designee may approve or reject the proposal.

Approval of any therapy dog program may be suspended or ended at any time by the building principal or Superintendent for reasons including, but not limited to any violation of District policy, the administrator's determination that the dog's presence interferes with the educational process, or the administrator's determination that the handler or dog have behaved in an unprofessional or unsafe manner.

District employees shall 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. The supervision and care of the approved therapy dog is solely the responsibility of the therapy dog handler when the therapy dog is on District property. 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. The therapy dog handler must maintain an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on District property.

Appropriate identification as a therapy dog will be kept with the handler at all times when on District property. The therapy dog shall be required to wear a vest, collar, or other article identifying them as a therapy dog and distinguishing them from a service dog. The therapy dog shall be under the control of the handler(s) at all times, and shall be required to be kept on a leash. The therapy dog shall only be allowed in areas authorized by the building principal. If any student or school employee assigned to a classroom in which a therapy dog is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the therapy dog, the handler of the dog will be required to remove the dog to a different location designated by an administrator. Therapy dogs shall not attend field trips.

Animals Regularly or Periodically Housed in Classrooms

1. No animal shall be housed in any school classroom without pre-approval of the building Principal.

- A. A classroom teacher seeking to house an animal in the classroom shall submit such request in writing explaining the educational purpose of having an animal(s) in the

classroom setting. A separate form must be provided for each animal to be housed in a classroom. All information sought on such form must be completed fully and accurately, to the best of the employee's knowledge.

B. The teacher signing this request application is responsible for assuming primary responsibility for the animal and shall be designated as the animal's supervising Teacher.

2. Prior to exposing any student to a live animal in the classroom, the supervising teacher shall provide written notification to all parents, including a copy of [Student Permission](#) Form for Exposure to Animals to obtain parental/guardian consent.

A. Copies of all such completed Student Permission Forms shall be maintained in the classroom by the supervising teacher with a copy provided to and maintained by the building administration

B. The supervising teacher shall consult with any parent/guardian with regard to students who are immunocompromised or have allergies, asthma, or other health concerns relating to contact or proximity to animals.

3. The supervising teacher who has been granted permission to house (an) animal(s) in the classroom shall provide formal classroom instruction to students regarding sanitation in the handling of animals and shall require all individuals handling animals to subsequently wash his or her hands thoroughly with soap and water.

4. Any student handling any animal must be directly supervised by the supervising teacher.

A. Only the supervising teacher or students designated by the supervising teacher, with proper permission as detailed herein, may handle a classroom animal.

B. Handling of any animals should be age appropriate, considering the disease-related risks of certain animals.

C. Should any student or employee be injured, including but not limited to animal bites or scratches, associated with the handling of a classroom animal, the supervising teacher is responsible for immediately reporting such event, in writing, to the building principal and assuring the student is directed to the school's office for appropriate medical care.

i. If appropriate, a District accident/injury report will be completed.

ii. The school's personnel shall notify the student's parent/guardian.

iii. If appropriate, personnel shall notify public health officials.

iv. At no time shall any student be exposed to an inherently dangerous animal or any animal which due to size, nature, or aggression could cause injury to a

Student.

5. Animals shall be handled humanely and in a healthy environment. If animals are to be kept in the classroom on days when classes are not in session, the supervising teacher shall be responsible for making arrangements for their care and safety.

6. Animals shall be displayed in enclosed cages or tanks or under otherwise appropriate restraints.

A. Upon placement in the classroom, the building principal shall inspect the enclosure and ensure that it meets standards for safeguarding the health and welfare of students.

B. Under no circumstances shall any student be allowed to clean any enclosure, cage, tank/aquarium, or other holding enclosure for any classroom animal or touch or otherwise come into contact with the materials that have been removed from any cleaned enclosure, cage, tank, aquarium, or other holding enclosure.

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C. Under no circumstance shall any student be allowed to touch or come into contact with any animal waste.

7. Animals must be clean and free of intestinal parasites, fleas, ticks and mites.

8. Animals shall not be brought in or obtained from the wild. If sought by the building principal, the supervising teacher shall provide proof of purchase or proof of transfer of the animal in question.

9. Animals maintained in a school classroom shall not have access to or contact with wild animals.

10. Classroom animals shall not be permitted to freely roam about any classroom or other area of the school.

11. No animal shall be allowed in any area of the school where food or drink is prepared or consumed.

12. Absent pre-approval from the Building principal, food for animals must be stored in air-tight closed containers, preferably hard plastic.

A. Feeding of classroom animals shall not occur in the presence of any student.

B. The supervising teacher and the building principal shall, at the time the animal comes into the school setting, confer as to the manner and method of feeding of such animal.

C. The supervising teacher shall agree with the directive of feeding of the animal or the animal shall not be permitted to be present at school.

13. The supervising teacher shall be responsible for the proper cleaning and disinfection of any area in which the animal is present.

A. The supervising teacher, building principal, and custodial personnel shall confer, at the time the animal comes into the school setting, regarding any necessary precautions for cleaning and maintenance in the classroom and/or around the animal or addressing animal waste.

B. The supervising teacher shall be responsible for the disposal of animal waste, using appropriate plastic bags and disposable gloves and sanitary cleansers.

14. Prior to the animal being brought into the classroom, the supervising teacher is responsible for assuring that no special permits, licenses, or other requirements (i.e. health/medical certification or examinations) are necessary to own and house the animal. If a permit, license, or other requirement does exist associated with the animal, it is solely the supervising teacher's responsibility to comply with such requirements and to provide the building principal with a copy of documentation assuring compliance. Any animal not in compliance shall not be brought into the school's setting. Any health care records associated with the animal shall be maintained in the classroom and is the responsibility of the supervising teacher.

15. At the commencement of each school year the building principal shall be responsible for cataloging any and all animals that are present in classrooms.

A. Should a new animal be brought into the school setting, or an existing animal leave the school setting, the supervising teacher is responsible for notifying the building principal.

B. The building principal is responsible for providing a copy of the animal catalog to the Superintendent.

16. No animal shall be transported on any school bus.

Visiting Animals to the Schools

1. As part of an educational program, there may be isolated instances in which an animal is brought into the school's setting. Prior to any such animal coming into the school setting, pre-approval must be obtained from the building principal no less than five school days prior to the scheduled event.

2. To seek approval, a written request must be submitted to the principal including the following:

A. The date and activity in question;

- B. Detail as to the relevance of the animal to the educational program;
- C. The animal(s) requested to be allowed on school property;
- D. Information as to how the health and safety of students, school personnel, and the animal will be addressed; and
- E. Copies of current health records and/or proof of current vaccination, as applicable (as detailed herein).

3. All animals must be housebroken.

4. The animal's owner agrees to hold the District, its employees, and agents harmless for any injury to the animal, including death, and any injury to any individual, including the handler, school staff, or school student.

Prohibited Animals

1. Regardless of the desired educational purpose, the following live animals are prohibited in any school facility, for any time or purpose:

- A. Inherently dangerous animals;
- B. Any venomous or toxin producing animals;
- C. Aggressive or unpredictable animals;
- D. Stray animals or animals with no health or vaccination history;
- E. Mammals at high risk for having or transmitting rabies.

2. The Superintendent or building principal may prohibit any animal from being present upon the school's property on a case by case basis.