



# Service Animal Guidelines

## **General information**

Service animals are individually trained to do work or perform specific tasks for a person with a disability. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the person's disability. The tasks may include, but are not limited to, guiding a person who is visually impaired or blind; alerting a person who is deaf or hard of hearing; pulling a wheelchair; assisting with mobility or balance; alerting or assisting a person who has seizures; retrieving objects; preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behavior by persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities; or performing other special tasks.

Animals whose sole function is to provide entertainment, emotional support, comfort, companionship, therapeutic benefits, or to promote emotional well-being are considered therapy or comfort animals and do not fall within the definition of service animal.

Service animals are not considered pets, therapy or comfort animals, classroom animals, or curriculum aids. Their access to MSBSD facilities is governed by federal and state law as well as MSBSD policy and procedure.

The MSBSD can exclude or remove the service animal from school property if:

- The animal is out of control and the handler does not or cannot take effective action to control it; or
- The animal is not housebroken; or
- The animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others; or
- The presence of the animal fundamentally alters the learning or work environment.

## **MSBSD Board Policy 3520**

Service animals shall be allowed access so long as the animals are required because of a disability and are individually trained to perform a specific task.

When a service animal is required on a long-term basis by a student or employee, a request for long-term access should be delivered in writing to either the Equal Employment Opportunity Office or the Human Resources Department no later than 10 days prior to the date on which the service animal is to be brought into service in the District facility.

Requests for long-term service animal access must include:

- Proof of Rabies vaccination

The individual seeking to introduce the service animal must acknowledge:

- The animal is “required” for the individual with a disability.
- The animal is “individually trained” to do work or a task for the individual with a disability.

In addition, the individual must accept and acknowledge the following responsibilities:

- All service animals will be treated for, and kept free of, fleas and ticks.
- All service animals will be kept clean and groomed to avoid shedding and dander.
- Owners of service animals are liable for any harm or injury caused by the animal to other students, staff, visitors, and/or property.

### **Safety**

**When on MSBSD property:**

1. A service animal shall be under the control of its handler at all times.
2. The service animal shall have a harness, leash or other tether, unless doing so interferes with the service animal’s safe, effective performance of work or tasks.
3. If a leash or tether is not utilized, the service animal must be under the voice or signal control of the handler.

### **Service Animal Access in MSBSD Classrooms & Facilities**

Service animals are allowed to accompany visitors at activities or events held at MSBSD schools or facilities. If special arrangements are needed in advance of the visit, please contact the school principal or the Equal Employment Opportunity Office.



## **Long-Term Service Animal Access**

Employees, students, or frequent volunteers who require the assistance of a service animal on a consistent basis should do the following:

- Deliver a written request for long-term access by the service animal to either the Equal Employment Opportunity Office or Human Resources Department. The request should also include proof of Rabies vaccination.
- To ensure that a long-term access plan can be timely developed, the student or employee should submit the written request for long-term access no later than 10 days prior to the date on which it is anticipated the service animal will be brought into service in the District school or facility.

## **Service Animal Behavior Standards**

The service animal must not disrupt or interfere with the learning or work environment. The behavioral expectations for the service animal include the following:

1. Animal is clean and does not have a foul odor.
2. Animal is under control of its handler.
3. Animal does not urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations.
4. Animal shall not make unsolicited contact with persons while on school property or on the school bus.
5. Animal's conduct does not disrupt the normal course of school business.
6. Animal works without unnecessary vocalization.
7. Animal shows no aggression toward people or other animals.
8. Animal does not solicit or steal food or other items from persons while on school property.
9. Animal has been specifically trained to perform its duties in public and is accustomed to being in public.
10. Animal must be able to lie quietly beside the handler without blocking aisles, doorways, etc.
11. Animal stays within close proximity of the individual at all times unless the nature of a specific task requires it to be working at a greater distance.



## **Responsibility for Service Animal**

The Mat-Su Borough School District does not provide service animals and does not assume responsibility for training, daily care, or healthcare of service animals.

It is the responsibility of the individual assisted by a service animal to ensure that the animal is properly leashed, to supervise and control the animal at all times while on district property, and to pay for any property damage caused by the animal.

## **Nondiscrimination Statement**

The Mat-Su Borough School District is committed to an environment of nondiscrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, ethnic group, marital or parental status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, union affiliation, or any other unlawful consideration. The Board shall promote programs that ensure that discriminatory practices are eliminated in all district activities. The District will comply with all the applicable nondiscrimination statutes and regulations under State and Federal law.

Inquiries or complaints may be addressed to the District's ADA Coordinator who is also the Director of Equal Employment Opportunity:

Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator  
Equal Employment Opportunity Office  
Mat-Su Borough School District  
501 N. Gulkana St.  
Palmer, AK 99645  
EEO@matsuk12.us

