

Therapy Dogs on District Property

Purpose

This policy establishes the procedures for the use of therapy dogs in Fargo Public School District (“District”) facilities for the benefit of students and staff.

Definitions

“Animal Assisted Activities” and “Animal Assisted Interactions” are non-goal-driven interactions where the specific content of the visit is spontaneous and is meant to provide motivational, educational, or recreational activities that enhance the quality of education and work.

“Animal Assisted Therapy” is a goal-drive intervention, which is directed or delivered by a health, human, or educational service professional and is meant to improve the physical, social, emotional, or cognitive function of an individual.

“Handler” is a volunteer who has been individually trained, evaluated, and registered with the therapy dog to provide Animal Assisted Activities, Animal Assisted Therapy, and Animal Assisted Interactions on District Property.

“Therapy dog” is a dog that has been professionally trained by an accredited or certified authority for the social and emotional benefits of students. Therapy dogs are not considered trained services dogs as described by the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”). Service animals are permitted on District property in accordance with Administrative Policy 6260 Service Animals on District Property.

Therapy Dog Standards and Procedures

The following requirements must be satisfied before a therapy dog will be allowed on District property.

1. Request

Upon approval of the principal, a handler who wishes to bring a therapy dog to school district property shall submit a completed written request form to the Superintendent, or the Superintendent’s designee, for approval (*See Below*). The request shall be submitted for approval each school year and whenever the handler wishes to use a different therapy dog. Such approval may be rescinded at any time at the sole discretion of the Superintendent, or the Superintendent’s designee. Once the Superintendent or the Superintendent’s designee approves the request, a plan for dog visits shall be developed with the Principal.

2. Training and Registration

The handler shall submit proof of registration as a therapy dog handler with each individual therapy dog they plan to bring on District property. Registration shall be from a therapy dog registering organization as determined by the Superintendent, in their sole discretion. At a minimum, such registration shall be from an organization that requires an

evaluation of the therapy dog and handler prior to registration and at least every two (2) years. Registration shall be in good standing at all times.

3. Health and Vaccination

The handler shall submit proof from a licensed veterinarian that the therapy dog is in good health and has been immunized against diseases common to dogs. Vaccinations shall be up to date at all times. The therapy dog should be healthy and visibly clean with no signs of fleas or ticks.

4. Licensing

The handler shall submit proof of licensure from the local municipality where the dog primarily resides.

5. Insurance

The handler must submit a copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the work of the handler and therapy dog while the two are on District property.

These requirements must be met on an annual basis, prior to the therapy dog entering District property.

Standards and Procedures on District Property

Once a handler has been approved by the Superintendent, or Superintendent's designee, to bring a therapy dog on District property, such handler shall adhere to the rules of their registering organization and the following rules of the District:

1. Identification

The handler and therapy dog shall wear appropriate identification issued by the registering organization identifying them as a registered handler and therapy dog. The handler shall bring only registered therapy dogs onto District property and may bring only one such dog at a time.

2. Health and Safety

The handler shall ensure that the therapy dog does not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school and that the therapy dog is brought to the District only when properly groomed, bathed, free of illness or injury and has the temperament appropriate to working with students and others in the schools.

3. Control

The handler shall ensure that the therapy dog wears a collar or harness and a leash no longer than four feet (4') and shall maintain control of the therapy dog by holding the leash at all times that the therapy dog is on District property, including during breaks, unless holding such leash would interfere with the therapy dog's safe, effective performance of its work or tasks. However, the handler shall maintain control of the therapy dog at all times and shall not tether the therapy dog to any object.

4. Supervision and Care of Therapy Dog

The handler shall (i) be solely responsible for the supervision and humane care of the therapy dog, including any feeding, exercising, and cleaning up after the therapy dog while the therapy dog is in a school building or on school property; (ii) not leave the therapy dog unsupervised or alone on school property at any time; and (iii) limit the therapy dog's work to four (4) consecutive hours at a time. The District is not responsible for providing any care, supervision or assistance to the therapy dog.

5. Authorized Areas

The handler shall ensure that the therapy dog has access to only such areas of the school buildings or properties that have been authorized by District administrators.

6. Allergies and Aversions

The handler shall remove the therapy dog to a separate area as designated by school administrators in such instances where any student or school employee who suffers dog allergies or aversions is present in an office, hallway or classroom.

7. Recordkeeping

Volunteer handlers shall sign themselves and their therapy dog in upon arrival at any school and shall sign both out upon departure from the building. Handlers who are school district staff shall sign in their therapy dog upon arrival and sign their out upon their departure.

8. Photographs

The handler shall not take any photographs of students or staff without first obtaining a written photo release.

9. Fees and Gratuities

The handler shall not charge a fee for the work they perform with the therapy dog, shall not borrow money or personal items, or receive any personal gratuity, gift or tip, such as money or jewelry from students or staff in the district.

10. Multiple Therapy Dogs on Site

The handler shall confirm whether or not there will be any other therapy dog(s) on site prior to scheduling any visit with a therapy dog and shall take steps with appropriate staff to ensure that the dogs do not engage inappropriately while on District property. When multiple therapy dogs are engaged in a planned activity on District property, the handlers shall ensure that the dogs have an opportunity to greet each other prior to entering the school building. Once inside the building, the handlers shall ensure that the dogs are each on a four-foot (4') leash, given workspace at least eight feet (8') from each other and are given no opportunity for contact or socialization with each other while working.

Responsibility and Liability

A therapy dog is the personal property of the handler and is not the property of the District. The handler shall assume full responsibility for the therapy dog's care, behavior, and suitability for

interacting with students and staff while the therapy dog is on District property. The handler shall further assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to school property or injury to anyone while on District property.

Exclusion or Removal from District Property

A therapy dog may be excluded from District property if a District administrator determines that: (1) the handler does not have control of the therapy dog; (2) the therapy dog is not housebroken; (3) the therapy dog presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school; or (4) the therapy dog's presence otherwise interferes with the educational program. The handler shall immediately remove their therapy dog from school property when instructed to do so by a school administrator.

(See below for Therapy Dog Request Form)

December 2024

Approval Request Form for Use of Therapy Animal

Please turn in your request to the Superintendent

Name of Handler: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email: _____ Name of Dog: _____ Breed: _____

Handler and Dog Certification Date: _____

Name of Certifying Organization: _____

Building where therapy dog will be used: _____

Please describe, in detail, what the therapy dog will do at the building: _____

Please attach the following to this form:

- Proof of registration as a therapy dog handler with the individual therapy dog to be used. (Note: Registration shall be from an organization that requires an evaluation of the therapy dog and handler prior to registration and at least every two years).
- Proof from a licensed veterinarian that the therapy dog is in good health and has been immunized against diseases common to dogs. Vaccinations shall be kept current and up to date at all times.
- Proof of licensure from the local municipality.
- Copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the work of the handler and therapy dog while the two are on District property.

By signing and submitting this form, Handler acknowledges that they have read and understand District Administrative Policy 6265 Therapy Dogs on District Property, agree to abide by such policy, and agree to assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to school property or injury to District staff, students, or others in the school caused by the therapy dog, and to hold the District harmless from any and all claims of personal injury or injury to property caused by the Handler’s therapy dog. In addition, Handler agrees to maintain all required certifications, licensures, vaccinations, and insurance policies in full force and effect for the entire school year for which permission is granted by the District for the therapy dog to be on District property. Handler understands and agrees that the District may, in its sole discretion, revoke approval for the Handler and/or therapy dog to be on District property due to any violation of Administrative Policy 6265 Therapy Dogs on District Property, or any other District Administrative Policy.

Handler Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

Superintendent, or designee, Signature: _____ Date: _____

Note: This Agreement is valid until the end of the current school year. It must be renewed prior to the start of each subsequent school year, or whenever a different therapy animal will be used.