Animals in School File IMG

Purpose

The Webster Public School District (the District) supports the use of service, assistance, and therapy animals to provide educational and social-emotional support for students, faculty, and staff. This policy outlines safe and effective practices for animals in schools to complement and enhance the experience of all members of our school community.

As always, the safety and well-being of our students, faculty, and staff are our primary consideration. We must also ensure the safety and well-being of any service or assistance animal on our campus. Therefore, unless otherwise authorized by the Superintendent, and except in accordance with law or with this policy, only approved animals are allowed on school property.

Animals allowed in the Webster Public School fall into one of three categories:

- **Service Animals** are defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as animals that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability.
- **School Assistance Animals** have been purpose-bred and trained to do specific, skilled tasks in a variety of different situations within the school environment. They are certified with their owners/Handlers (who are typically District employees), and model good behavior, tolerance, and acceptance. School Assistance animals do not qualify as service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **Therapy/Comfort Animals** provide affection, comfort and support to people in hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, schools, libraries, hospices and/or disaster areas. They have gone through an accredited certification program with their owners/Handlers, and are considered pets. Therapy animals do not qualify as service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

School Assistance Animals Request Form

School Requesting:

Bartlett High School
Webster Middle School
Park Ave Elementary School
District Office

Person Requesting: **Date Requesting**:

School Assistance Animals are trained in specific tasks that staff can incorporate into their school day. The training also ensures that the animal is always under the control of the Handler and that each task and command is consistently and reliably performed.

Definitions

School Assistance Animal - an animal that has been individually trained, evaluated, and certified[1] with his/her Handler to provide assisted activities and interactions specifically within a school setting.

School Assistance Animal Team Registration & General Guidelines

- The use of School Assistance Animal Teams is at the discretion of the District. The Superintendent, or designee, may deny or revoke the registration/approval of any School Assistance animal Team for any reason
- The building principal, Superintendent, or designee, may define or limit the scope or location of activities of any School Assistance Animal Team for any reason
- Each school year, School Assistance Animal Teams must register with the District
- The Superintendent, or designee, will keep a record of registered School Assistance Animal Teams
- **To be approved, a School Assistance Animal Team must provide the following documentation each school year:**
    - Proof of School Assistance Animal Team certification and insurance
    - Vaccinations (must be current with rabies vaccine)
    - Animal or similar license (where required by or available for the municipality, and/or Handler's place of residence)
    - The Handler(s) must have an active CORI on file with the District
    - Any other documentation the Superintendent, or designee, deems appropriate
- Unless otherwise authorized by the Superintendent, School Assistance Animal Teams must meet all requirements within this policy to be registered with the District
- School Assistance Animals are not allowed on school buses or any other District transportation without explicit approval of the Superintendent

School Assistance Animal Guidelines and Expectations:

- School Assistance Animals must be properly groomed at all times, with the frequency appropriate to maintaining safe and healthy interactions
- Animals must remain under the control of their Handler at all times (except as provided in the next section of this policy)
- Food or treats are prohibited, unless allowed by and under the supervision of the Handler.
- School Assistance Animals should have a designated area for resting/breaks during the day, such as a crate within an office or classroom where they can be undisturbed.

School Assistance Animal Employee Handler Responsibilities

[1] Certification through Assistance animals International (ADI) preferred.

District employee Handlers may have school-based responsibilities that, in some circumstances, conflict with their duties as a Handler.

Therefore, below are additional requirements:

- There must be a documented plan for the care of the animal in the event the employee is not able to perform thei. Handler responsibilities because of the needs of their role as an employee.
    - The building principal and Superintendent must approve the plan
    - The plan must be able to provide for the safety and well-being of the animal for at least 4 hours
    - The animal cannot interact with students while plan is active
- The animal must be provided safe and comfortable accommodations when not performing support services
- Unless necessary, normal feedings should occur outside of school hours and off school property. Should feedings need to be done on school property, the Handler will:
    - Obtain approval from the building principal
    - Store all food in sealed containers
    - Feed the animal in a location away from contact with people and other animals
- The Handler is responsible for the proper handling of any waste.
    - The building principal, in conjunction with custodial/facilities staff, will provide procedures for proper disposal of any animal waste.
    - The building principal, in conjunction with custodial/facilities staff, will designate a location on the property for the animal to defecate and urinate .
    - All solid waste must be immediately collected and disposed of .

Approval of School Assistance Animal Teams

Any new School Assistance Animal Team must be approved by the Superintendent. The Superintendent must approve the continued use of each School Assistance Animal Team prior to the start of each school year.

School Assistance Animal Teams serve at the discretion of the building principal and/or the Superintendent. The building principal, Superintendent, or designee may request a School Assistance Animal Team cease the performance of support services, or remove the animal from school property at any time.

Review of School Assistance Animal Teams

School Assistance Animal Teams must be observed in person by the building or district administration monthly. Twice a year, a review of the activities of a School Assistance Animal Team must be filed with the Superintendent.

Please submit this form to the Building Principal.

I certify that I have attached all documentations required and agree to the terms and conditions of the policy.

Employee: _____ **Date:** _____

Principal: _____ **Date:** _____

Superintendent: _____ **Date:** _____

School Requesting:

Bartlett High School
Webster Middle School
Park Ave Elementary School
District Office

Person Requesting: **Date Requesting:**

A Therapy animal is an animal that is trained to provide affection, comfort and support to people in hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, schools, libraries, hospices and/or disaster areas. The Webster Public School District requires Therapy animals to be certified through an AKC-recognized Therapy animal Organization (non-AKC-recognized organizations *may* be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Superintendent). Therapy animals can provide educational and social-emotional support for students, faculty, and staff. The use of Therapy Animals must be done in a prudent manner that prioritizes the safety and well-being of our school community.

Definitions

Therapy animal – An animal that has been certified, along with a named Handler, by an AKC-recognized Therapy Animal Organization to perform support services.

Handler – A named person who has been trained and/or certified, along with a named Therapy Animal, by the Therapy animal Organization to perform support services and who is responsible for the care and control of a Therapy animal.

Therapy Team – A unique named Therapy Animal and Handler combination that has been trained and/or certified by an AKC-Recognized Therapy animal Organization to perform support services.

Therapy Organization – An organization that provides training and/or certification of, and insurance for, Therapy Teams.

School Visit – Any time a Therapy Team comes onto school property or is in any school-related setting, including off-site school function and District transportation.

Therapy Team Registration & General Guidelines

- The use of Therapy Teams is at the discretion of the District. The Superintendent, or designee, may deny or revoke the registration/approval of any Therapy Team for any reason.
- The building principal, Superintendent, or designee, may define or limit the scope of location of activities of any Therapy Team for any reason.
- Each school year, Therapy Teams must register with the District in order to perform school visits.
- The Superintendent, or designee, will keep a record of Therapy Teams registered for school visits.
- **To be registered, a Therapy Team must provide the following documentation each school year:**
  - Proof of Therapy Team certification and insurance
  - Vaccinations (Must be current with rabies vaccine)
  - animal or similar license (where required by or available for the municipality, and/or Handler's place of residence)
  - The Handler(s) must have an active CORI on file with the District
  - Any other documentation the Superintendent, or designee, deems appropriate
- Unless otherwise authorized by the Superintendent, Therapy Team must meet all requirements within this policy and be registered with the District prior to any school visit
- All school visits, including by registered Therapy Teams, require prior approval by the building principal, or designee.
- Therapy animals are not allowed on school buses or any other District transportation without explicit approval of the Superintendent.

District or Municipal Employee Handler

Therapy Team Handlers who are also District or municipal employees may have responsibilities that, in some circumstances, conflict with their duties as a Handler. Therefore, below are additional requirements if the Handler is also a District or municipal employee.

- There must be a documented plan for the care of the animal in the event the employee is not able to perform their Handler responsibilities during a visit, because of the needs of their role as an employee.
    - The building principal and Superintendent must approve the plan
    - The plan must be able to provide for the safety and well-being of the animal for at least 4 hours
    - The animal cannot interact with students while plan is active, as therapy activities cannot occur absent the Handler

Planning for a School Visit

Below are guidelines for what is expected for requesting or preparing for a visit from a Therapy Team.

- The Superintendent, or designee, will maintain a process for faculty or staff to request and document a Therapy Team visit. **The process or documentation should include:**
    - The reason for the Therapy Team visit
    - The date(s), time(s), and duration of the visit
    - Location(s) of the visit (i.e. classroom, library, etc.)
    - The group(s) that will be interacting with the Therapy Team
    - Type of interaction requested (e.g., literacy animal, petting, etc.)
    - Whether a specific Therapy Team or type of Therapy Team is desired
    - Any mitigations required due to allergies, fear of animals, etc.
    - The identification of an administration member as a point of contact and oversight for visits
    - A review after the visit is complete
    - Any other information the Superintendent, or designee, deems appropriate
- The Superintendent, or designee, shall maintain a record of all Therapy Team visits
    - Upon completion of a Therapy Team's first school visit, the building principal shall, along with submitting the standard documentation, provide oral feedback on the Therapy Team to the Superintendent, or designee, prior to subsequent visits by that Therapy Team
- Faculty or staff members requesting a visit from a Therapy Team should consider the following:
    - Faculty are encouraged to inform families of upcoming Therapy Team visits, particularly with K-4 students
    - Plans to accommodate those who may need to participate differently as well as those who will not be able to participate due to allergies. This includes both allergies to dander as well as food contact allergies, as animal food may contain allergens that can get onto an animal's coat.
        - Note that while individuals with allergies may experience lessened symptoms with specific animals, all animals can cause allergic symptoms.
    - Comfort levels with animals vary. Faculty and staff are encouraged to query students, as well as other faculty and staff who may be involved, and have plans to accommodate those who may need to participate differently as well as those who are not comfortable participating.

School Visits

Below are guidelines for what is expected during school visits.

- Therapy animals must be properly groomed prior to a school visit. While specific grooming requirements may vary by specific breed, generally this means:
    - Bathed within 72 hours of visit (reduces risk of allergic reactions)
    - Brushed within 24 hours of visit (reduces risk of allergic reactions)
    - Nails trimmed
- Animals must remain with, and under the control of, their Handler at all times

- Animals must be leashed at all times
    - Leash must be standard, non-retracting, and 6 feet or less in length
    - Prong, choke, pinch, static, shock, or other correction collars are prohibited
- Food or treats are prohibited, unless required as part of the Therapy Organization's program protocols
- Therapy animals may not interact with other animals during school visits
- The Handler is responsible for the proper handling of any waste
    - All solid waste must be collected and removed from school property unless the building administration provides for proper onsite disposal
    - The custodial staff should be contacted if a animal creates waste in a school building or on external surfaces where additional remediation is necessary

Please submit this form to the Building Principal.

I certify that I have attached all documentations required and agree to the terms and conditions of the policy.

Employee: _____ **Date**: _____

Principal: _____ **Date**: _____

Superintendent: _____ **Date**: _____

First Reading: 6-13-2023
Second Reading: 7-18-2023
Third Reading and Adoption: 8-22-2023