

## **ANIMALS IN SCHOOL**

It is the policy of the Bethel Board of Education that students, staff, and/or patrons will not bring animals onto school premises except in connection with an organized and approved school activity, or as otherwise authorized by the appropriate building principal. Written permission must be obtained from the appropriate building principal before animals are brought to school or to any school activity. Service animals will be allowed in accordance with federal law. Members of the public, staff, and students shall not be allowed to bring emotional support animals and therapy animals which do not meet the definition of a service animal on school property. An exception may be made by the superintendent for emotional support animals and therapy animals to be brought onto school premises by the school counselor for the benefit of the student body. The district shall post a sign in a conspicuous location outside the entrance of each school building stating which animals or types of animals are prohibited in accordance with Oklahoma law. The sign posted will indicate that service animals are permitted in accordance with federal law.

Authorized animals must be adequately housed and cared for while on school grounds. Only the teacher, or students designated by the teacher, may handle the animals. If dogs are allowed to be on school grounds by the principal, the dogs must be leashed at all times and not permitted to run at large.

If animals are to be kept on school grounds on days when classes are not in session, arrangements must be made for their care.

If a staff member or student has been bitten by an animal and the skin has been pierced, the incident must be reported immediately to the school office by the student or the supervising adult. The principal will notify public health authorities and cause the animal to be impounded for observation. Public health authorities will determine the appropriate term of confinement of the animal and method of observation.

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that individuals with disabilities cannot perform themselves. Service animals are not pets. There are several kinds of service animals that assist individuals with disabilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, animals that:

1. Assist individuals who are blind or have severe sight impairments,
2. Alert individuals with hearing impairments to sounds,
3. Pull wheelchairs or carry and pick-up items for individuals with mobility impairments, and
4. Assist individuals with mobility impairments with balance.

The district shall not assume or take custody or control of, or responsibility for, any service animal or the care or feeding thereof. The owner or person having custody and control of the service animal shall be liable for any damages to persons, premises, property, or facilities caused by the service animal, including, but not limited to, clean up, stain removal, etc. If a service animal is not "house broken" the service animal will be denied access to school district property.

If, in the opinion of the Superintendent or designee any service animal is out of control in the school setting or during District transportation, the matter shall be immediately reported to local law enforcement. The parent or guardian of the student having custody and control of the service animal will be required to remove the service animal from District premises immediately.

**LEGAL AUTHORITY:**      **4 O.S. § 801**