

## 4530 Animals in District Facilities

Policy 4530

STATUS: ADOPTED

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### *ANIMALS IN DISTRICT FACILITIES*

Adopted: April 14, 2004;

Last Revised: June 19, 2013; Sept, 2019

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#### Description:

Whenever there are animals in school district facilities, the safety and well-being of individuals on site and the care and health of the animals will be primary considerations.

The Board of Education supports:

**Small animals in the classroom that stimulate learning and teach students about responsibility and care.**

**Assistance dogs who are specially trained to assist children and adults who have a physical or developmental disability.** The use of assistance dogs is a recognized aid to children and adults with significant needs. These trained dogs will be allowed in the school, on school district property and on school district buses when it has been determined that the assistance dog helps the student to have equal access to the services, programs or activities offered by the school district.

**Therapy dogs who are in schools to support learners with emotional support.** In recognition of their use, balanced with the running of a school, one trained therapy animal may be housed in a school. These animals must be trained and under the supervision of an adult at all times. The introduction of the therapy dog to the school community must not create barriers to another students' learning.

Considerations for other animals in schools shall be addressed in the regulation.

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**Definitions:**

**Classroom pet:** defined as an animal chosen by a teacher to be kept in their individual classroom for some type of educational value, such as a means to stimulate learning, and teach students about responsibility and compassion through their care and upkeep. The pet will be small and kept in a cage or tank. The teacher is ultimately responsible for the care and maintenance of the classroom pet within the classroom and to ensure the health and safety of the school community.

**Assistance Dog:** means a dog specifically trained to mitigate an individual's disabilities. "Assistance Dogs" have the qualifications prescribed by Assistance Dogs International. Assistance Dogs include, but are not limited to:

- "Guide Dogs" are dogs trained to assist persons who are visually impaired
- "Autism Support Dogs" are dogs trained as assistants for persons with autism and which have the qualifications prescribed by Assistance Dogs International.
- "Hearing Dogs" are dogs that alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to specific sounds.
- "Seizure Response Dogs" are dogs trained to provide emergency response for individuals with epilepsy
- "Service Dogs" are dogs trained to assist individuals who utilize a wheelchair.

**Therapy Dog:** means a dog trained and certified by an accredited organization and is trained to provide affection and comfort to individuals in many different settings.

**Description:**

Animals are welcome in the school building and/or school property as long as they provide an educational, social/emotional or service aspect for the students in the school. Animals in school are primarily for teaching the students' responsibility, empathy and caring about the health and well-being of others. Human and animal health and safety outweigh educational considerations.

**1.0 Classroom Pets**

Classroom pets housed in the school facility, will be subject to the Principal's approval, and there will be relevance to the educational program of the students.

**1.1 Small animal pets (e.g. fish, rabbits etc.)**

- 1.1.1 The classroom teacher shall be responsible for maintaining a clean environment for the animal, and for the care and responsibility of any animal left in the classroom.
- 1.1.2 Provision for the care of a live animal on weekends and holidays is the responsibility of the classroom teacher.
- 1.1.3 All animals in the classroom shall be kept in enclosed, self contained, environments that will not permit unsupervised handling of the animal by students.
- 1.1.4 The animal's environment shall be large enough to provide for the care and health of the animal.

## 2.0 Other Pets

### 2.1 Larger Animals (e.g. dogs etc.)

- 2.1.1 Any larger animal remaining at school for the day must be in training, trained and/or certified as therapy animals and/or therapy animals.
- 2.1.2 The animals are not permitted to stay in the building overnight.
- 2.1.3 The owner is responsible for cleaning up the animal's waste so that it does not contaminate the building or the grounds.

### 2.2 Pet Exhibition

- 2.2.1 Teachers should have Principal approval and ensure that the health and safety of their students is considered prior to approving one-time animal visits, such as show and tell, selecting a classroom pet or petting farm activities.

## 3.0 Introduction to the Classroom/School:

Prior to introducing any animals into the classroom, teachers shall be certain that students and school personnel do not have any health (physical, emotional) concerns to the animal's presence and that:

- a) the animals are certified by a veterinarian to be free from any diseases or parasites and do not present the risk of introducing disease over time (ie: salmonella in the shell of a turtle);
- b) the animal(s) will present no physical danger to students;
- c) the animal(s) will not be unduly stressed by being introduced to the classroom environment;
- d) students will be instructed in the proper care and handling of the animal.
- e) When an animal constitutes a health or safety risk, or represents a risk to the security and well being of a student or staff member, the animal shall be removed.

## 4.0 Procedures for Assistance/Therapy Dogs

The following procedures will be put into place prior to the "Assistance/Therapy Dog" being allowed into the school.

### 4.1 Parent/Guardian or trainer (a trainer being the adult in control of the dog at all times) Responsibilities

- 4.1.1 Parents/Guardians or trainers will make application to the district with:
  - a) A letter outlining the specific benefits an Assistance/Therapy Dog will have on their child's or in the case of a trainer general students' education;

- b) A letter of recommendation from a professional (Medical Doctor, Psychologist, Certified Behaviour Therapist etc.), recommending the use of an Assistance/Therapy Dog for the child and outlining how the Assistance/Therapy Dog will help improve the student's access to learning;
- c) A Certificate of Training for the Assistance/Therapy Dog from an accredited organization;
- d) Certification of up to date vaccinations provided by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and a letter confirming that the Assistance Dog/Therapy is in good health;
- e) An annual copy of a municipal dog license, if applicable; and,
- f) Evidence that the student or trainer can maintain appropriate care and control of the Assistance/Therapy Dog while it is on school property.
- g) Parents/Guardians or trainer will take responsibility for providing necessary training for any school staff in the use and care of the Assistance/Therapy Dog.

4.1.2 Parents/Guardians or trainer will provide:

- Food
- Water bowl
- At least one bio-break procedure per day
- Suitable container for waste, the removal and disposal of the waste

4.2 School District/School Responsibilities

4.2.1 The school district shall not be responsible for the training, feeding, grooming or any care of any assistance/therapy dog permitted to attend school or ride on school buses under this policy. The school district must approve any person who is authorized to assist in the care and supervision of the assistance/therapy dog while on school property.

4.2.2 The Case Manager and Principal/Vice Principal will arrange a case conference with the parents/guardians or trainer, the student (when appropriate), appropriate school and district staff and other necessary consultants to develop a plan to define:

- a) The purpose and function of the Assistance/Therapy Dog;
- b) Who will accompany and handle the Assistance/Therapy Dog outside during recess and lunch breaks;
- c) The safest and most environmentally sound place for the Assistance/Therapy Dog to relieve itself;
- d) Considerations for transitioning the Assistance/Therapy Dog into the school;
- e) Considerations for weather, school safety procedures, rules of conduct around the assistance dog and classroom considerations.

4.2.3 To send information letters regarding the Assistance/Therapy Dog to all staff, students and parents/guardians involved with the school. These letters, which shall be retained in the student's confidential file, would include:

**4.2.3.1 To the school community:**

This letter will inform all staff including teachers, educational assistant, custodians, support staff, lunch hour supervisors, regular volunteers, and health and safety representatives of the presence of the Assistance/Therapy dog.

**4.2.3.2 To the parents/guardians of students in the school:**

This letter will elicit information concerning allergies, extreme phobias, and other concerns from the students and parents/guardians.

**4.2.3.3 To the parents/guardians of students who will be sharing bus transportation with the student who owns the Assistance/Therapy Dog:**

This letter will elicit information concerning allergies, extreme phobias, and other concerns from the students and parents/guardians.

- 4.2.4 To screen and approve any trainers or other personnel required to assist with the care and supervision of the dog while on school property. A criminal record check may be required for non-school district personnel.
- 4.2.5 Revise emergency procedures as required to include the Assistance/Therapy Dog, such as evacuations and notify the Fire Department regarding the existence of the Assistance/Therapy Dog.
- 4.2.6 Arrange for demonstrations from a certified trainer for the student body, staff and the community as required to provide education and awareness of Assistance/Therapy Dogs in schools.

**5.0 Limiting, Removing or Excluding Assistance Dogs from School**

- 5.1 The Principal may limit, remove or exclude from school facilities or property any Assistance /Therapy Dog if the Assistance/Therapy Dog:
  - a) Is unable to reliably perform the service for which it has been approved;
  - b) Is not under the full control of the student with the disability or the trainer;
  - c) Does not urinate or defecate in appropriate locations;
  - d) Vocalizes unnecessarily;
  - e) Shows aggression toward people or other animals;
  - f) Is a public health risk;
  - g) Is unclean and unsanitary;
  - h) Or the dog's presence significantly impairs the learning of students.
- 5.2 The Principal may limit, remove or exclude from school facilities or property any Assistance/Therapy Dog if the student or the student's parents:

- a) fail to provide or maintain current documentation required by these regulations;
- b) fail to abide by any additional conditions of the terms of an Individual Education Plan regarding their assistance/therapy dog.

#### 6.0 Restrictions for Assistance/Therapy Dogs

The School District imposes some restrictions on Therapy Dogs for safety reasons. Areas or programs which may be considered off-limits for Therapy Dogs include, but are not limited to:

- Laboratories, mechanical rooms, custodial closets, food preparation areas, areas where protective clothing is necessary, areas which have exposed, sharp metal cutting or other sharp objects which may pose a threat to the Assistance/Therapy Dog's safety, areas with high levels of dust, and areas where there is moving machinery.

The determination to deny or limit the access of an Assistance/Therapy dog to specific programs or areas of that school facility will be on a case-by case basis.

#### 7.0 Conflict Resolution:

Employees, students/parents of a student with medical issues that are impacted by dogs (such as respiratory diseases) should contact the school Principal if they have a concern about exposure to an Assistance/Therapy Dog. The employee, student/parents of a student will be asked to provide medical documentation that identifies the disability and the need for an accommodation. The school Principal will facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the conflicting needs/accommodations of all persons involved.

#### 8.0 Notice of Appeal

Any student/parent of a student with an Assistance/Therapy Dog who is aggrieved by the school Principal's decision to remove, limit or exclude an Assistance/Therapy Dog may appeal the decision using the usual appeal process developed by the School District.

#### 9.0 Elevated Risk Animals

The District discourages the presence of the following animals in school environments for reasons of elevated risk:

- Cats
- Reptiles
- Animals that have histories of being aggressive or unpredictable