

## Therapy Dogs on District Premises

A therapy dog is permitted onto District premises, subject to this procedure. For purposes of this procedure, “District premises” refers to school buildings, vehicles, and all other District property. The District shall comply with all state and federal laws, regulations and rules regarding the use of therapy dogs by staff or students under appropriate circumstances.

### PURPOSE

Therapy dogs can be used to achieve specific physical, social, cognitive, and emotional goals with students. A therapy dog is trained to provide affection and comfort to students or other individuals under the direction and control of a qualified handler who works with the dog as a team. Therapy dogs are not “service animals” as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, 28 C.F.R. Part 35.

### PROCEDURES/REQUIREMENTS

- Therapy dog teams (dog and handler) are required to be registered with one of the following organizations:
  - Therapy Dogs International (TDI)
  - Pet Partners Therapy Animal Program
  - Cares, Inc. Assistance Dog (includes Public Access Certification)
- The dog that is brought to a school building will need to be accompanied by the trained handler with whom the animal is registered. The handler will be a District employee and/or registered District volunteer, whose role is in alignment with the purpose of the therapy dog. Therapy dogs must be under the control of their handlers at all times, wear proper identification, and always be on a 4-foot leash, or shorter, or restricted by some form of containment.
- All legal liability will be assumed by the owner of the therapy dog.
- Requests for the use of a registered therapy dog will be made by the handler by completing the appropriate form and submitting it, along with necessary documentation, on an annual basis, to the Office of Learning and Leadership. Necessary documentation includes:
  - Completed Canine Therapy Involvement Approval Application Form
  - Current verification of registration with one of the district-approved organization
  - Statement from veterinary office confirming that all shots are up-to-date
  - Proof of vaccination and physical examination
  - Copy of Guidelines for Therapy Dog Involvement signed by the handler and building Administrator
- The dog must be clean and well-groomed with trimmed nails, clean teeth, free of internal and external parasites, and in overall good health. Any dog with a fresh wound, recent surgery or other injuries must be excused from therapy visits until fully recovered and healed. Female dogs in “season” cannot participate in therapy visits.
- The handler will work with the building Administrator to develop a summary of expected duties and responsibilities of the canine therapy team to the Office of Learning and Leadership.
- The owner of the dog must provide an appropriately sized crate for the dog along with an area for the dog to stay if an individual has pet allergies or significant emotional discomfort with any type of animal.
- The primary handler will be solely responsible for any clean up related to the dog ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations.
- Parents must be informed of the presence of a therapy dog in the school building to allow any concerns or questions to be raised.
- Canine therapy teams are required to renew their status with the district annually prior to the start of each school year.
- Applications and supporting documents will be kept on file in the Office of Learning and Leadership and the building(s) at which the canine therapy team provides services.

- The District/Building Administrator retains discretion to exclude or remove a therapy dog from its property for any reason including but not limited to:
  - The handler does not take effective action to control the dog's behavior.
  - The dog is not housebroken.
  - The dog's presence or behavior fundamentally interferes in the functions of the District.
  - The dog poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by reasonable modifications.

Reference: Policy 904, Procedure 904a

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