

930 THERAPY DOGS

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the use of therapy dogs in the Dover-Eyota Public Schools.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The school district supports the use of therapy dogs for the benefit of its students subject to the conditions of this policy.

A. Benefits from working or visiting with a therapy dog include reduced stress, improved physical and emotional well-being, lower blood pressure, decreased anxiety, improved self-esteem and normalization of the environment, increasing the likelihood of successful academic achievement by the student.

B. 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 and/or recreational activities that enhance the quality of life.

C. Examples of activities that students may engage in with a therapy dog include petting and/or hugging the dog, speaking to the dog, giving the dog simple commands that the dog is trained to respond to and reading to the dog.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. "Animal Assisted Therapy" is a goal-driven intervention which is directed and/or delivered by a health, human or education service professional and is meant to improve physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive functioning of an individual.

B. "Therapy Dog" is a dog who has been individually trained, evaluated and registered with his/her handler to provide animal assisted activities, animal assisted therapy and animal assisted interactions within a school or other facility. Therapy dogs are not "emotional support animals" or "service animals" as that term is used in the American with Disabilities Act. The dog must be well behaved and have a temperament that is suitable for interaction with students and others in a public school.

C. A "Handler" is an individual school district staff member or volunteer who owns a therapy dog and who has been individually trained, evaluated and registered with his/her therapy dog to provide animal assisted activities, animal assisted therapy and animal assisted interactions within a school or other facility. A therapy dog is the personal property of the handler and is not the property of the school district. The handler shall assume full responsibility for the therapy dog's supervision, care (including any feeding, exercising, and clean up), behavior and suitability for interacting with students and others in the school while the therapy dog is on school district property. The school district is not responsible for providing any care, supervision, or assistance for a therapy dog.

III. THERAPY DOG STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

The following requirements must be satisfied before a therapy dog will be allowed in school buildings or on school district property:

A. **Request** – A handler who wants to bring a therapy dog to school must submit a written request form to a principal or superintendent. The request must be renewed each school year or whenever a different therapy dog will be used.

B. **Training and Registration** – The handler must submit the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen Registration or its equivalent as determined by the Superintendent. The registration must remain current at all times.

C. **Health and Vaccination** – The therapy dog must be clean, well groomed, in good health, house broken, and immunized against diseases common to dogs. The handler must submit proof of current licensure from the local licensing authority and proof of the therapy dog's current vaccinations and immunizations from a licensed veterinarian.

D. **Control** – A therapy dog must be at all times under the control of the handler or school employee through the use of a leash or by voice commands.

E. **Identification** – The therapy dog must have appropriate identification identifying it as a therapy dog.

F. **No Disruption** – The therapy dog must not disrupt the educational process by barking, seeking attention, or any other behavior.

G. **Health and Safety** – The therapy dog must not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school.

H. **Supervision and Care of Therapy dogs** – The handler is solely responsible for the supervision and care of the therapy dog, including any feeding, exercising, and clean up while the animal is in a school building or on school property. The school district is not responsible for providing any care, supervision, or assistance for a therapy dog.

I. **Authorized Area(s)** – The handler shall only allow the therapy dog to be in areas in school buildings or on school property that are authorized by school district administrators.

J. **Insurance** – The handler must submit a copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on school property.

K. **Allergic Reactions/Allergies and Aversions** – If any student or school employee assigned to a classroom in which a therapy dog is permitted suffers an allergic reaction or aversion to the therapy dog, the handler of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location designated by an administrator.

L. **Exclusion or Removal from School – A therapy dog may be excluded from school property and buildings if a school administrator determines that:**

1. A 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;
4. The animal's presence otherwise interferes with the educational process; or

The animal poses a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school.

The handler shall be required to remove the therapy dog from school premises immediately upon such a determination.

M. Damages to School Property and Injuries – The handler of a therapy dog is solely responsible and liable for any damage to school property or injury to personnel, students, or others caused by the therapy dog.

N. Therapy dog in Training – This policy shall also be applicable to handlers/trainers who can provide evidence that they and the therapy dog are enrolled in a training program.

O. Annual Request To Use a Therapy Dog in School – The Annual Request shall list the limited areas in which the dog can occupy.

Cross References:

Dover-Eyota Public Schools Policy 931 (Animals on School Property)

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