

SERVICE AND THERAPY ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS *Policy Code: 4202/5029/7272*

The board will make reasonable accommodations for qualified persons with disabilities in accordance with policy 1730/4022/7231, Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disabilities, and the requirements of state and federal law. An individual with a disability may be accompanied by his or her service animal on school property subject to the requirements of this policy. If necessary, the superintendent may establish further administrative regulations for the use of service **and therapy** animals on school property.

A. DEFINITION OF “SERVICE ANIMAL” AND THERAPY DOG

A “service animal” for purposes of this policy is any dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to, a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual or other mental disability. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability or necessary to mitigate a disability. Federal regulation 28 C.F.R. 35.104 provides examples of types of work or tasks that would qualify. Service animals do not include any other species of animal, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, except that a miniature horse will be permitted for use as a service animal if reasonable modifications can be made after assessing the specific factors listed in 28 C.F.R. 35.136(i).

A ‘Therapy Dog’ is a dog that has been individually trained and certified to work with its owner to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship to school district students. Therapy dogs are not ‘service animals’ as that term is used in the Americans 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. Therapy dogs are personal property of the teacher or employee and are not owned by the school district.

Animals whose sole function is to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, companionship or therapeutic benefits or to act as a crime deterrent are not service animals, **but therapy dogs who will also be provided for under this policy and will meet expectations within the policy. Use of such animals is based on superintendent approval in consultation with school based leaders.**

B. USE OF A SERVICE ANIMAL ON SCHOOL PROPERTY BY STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

1. Introduction of a Service Animal

School administrators shall facilitate the introduction of an eligible service animal into the school environment. To promote a successful integration of the service animal into the educational program and to minimize unnecessary disruption, an employee or student with a disability who intends to bring a service animal to school during the school day is encouraged to follow these guidelines.

- a. The employee, student or student’s parent should notify the superintendent and the principal of the applicable school in writing at least 10 work days prior to the date proposed to bring the service animal onto school property.

b. The employee, student or student's parent should work with school personnel to create a plan addressing the presence of the service animal during the school day. A plan to integrate a service animal into the school environment should include the following:

1) appropriate training for school personnel and students regarding interaction with the service animal;

2) arrangements for meeting the service animal's basic needs during the school day;

3) any necessary modifications to the educational program so that the employee or student with a disability may be accompanied by the service animal; and

4) when necessary, provisions for the presence of a handler other than the employee or student with the disability to control or care for the service animal.

c. It is ~~recommended~~, but not required that the service animal wear identification to provide adequate notice to students, school personnel and school visitors that the dog is a service animal.

d. The service animal should be free of parasites and otherwise in good health.

e. **The owner must submit certification of Training as approved by the Superintendent and the certification must remain current at all times.**

2. Presence of a Service Animal on School Property

An employee or student with a disability accompanied by a service animal must meet the following requirements for a service animal to be present on school property.

a. A student or employee who elects to be accompanied by a service animal will be expected to care for and supervise the animal. If a student is not capable of providing adequate care and supervision, the parent will be responsible for providing such care and supervision.

b. If a student requires assistance from a parent or handler to control and care for the service animal while on school property, that individual must submit to a background screening, which may include a criminal history check in accordance with state law and any procedures established by the superintendent.

c. The service animal must be on a leash or other mechanical restraint at all times. If mechanical restraint is not feasible due to a student's disability, the animal must be under other sufficient means of control.

d. The service animal must be housebroken, under the control of its handler, and have received all necessary vaccinations as required by state law.

e. **All necessary paperwork to register a service/therapy animal must be completed, approved and on file prior to the admission of the animal on to school property. Appropriate paperwork will be made available through the Office of the Superintendent.**

The principal or designee shall notify all security personnel of the existence and possible locations of any service animals on school property.

C. USE OF A SERVICE ANIMAL ON SCHOOL PROPERTY BY SCHOOL VISITORS

A school visitor who is an individual with a disability may be accompanied by a service animal in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations and with policy 5020, Visitors to the Schools. A service animal that is accompanying a school visitor may be properly excluded from school property for a reason(s) set forth in section F of this policy.

D. LIABILITY

The board may hold the owner or handler of a service animal liable for any property damage caused by the animal to the same extent required by other board policy or administrative rules that impose liability for property damage. In addition, either the owner or handler, or both may be liable for personal injury caused by the animal or related to the presence of the animal on school property.

E. EXCLUSION OF A SERVICE ANIMAL FROM SCHOOL PROPERTY

School personnel shall not ask an individual with a disability about the nature or extent of his or her disability or for proof of a service animal's training as a condition of allowing the animal onto school property. However, when the disability is not readily apparent to school personnel, a principal or designee may inquire as to whether the animal is required because of a disability and what work or task the animal has been trained to perform. Such inquiries may be made to confirm that the dog is a service animal and is rightfully present on school property. **Principals will require and keep on file at the school proof of current vaccinations.**

A principal or designee may exclude a service animal from school property for the following reasons:

1. The animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by reasonable modifications.
2. The animal is out of control and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control it.
3. The animal is not housebroken.
4. The presence or behavior of the animal fundamentally alters the service, program or activity of the school system.
5. **The animal is not free of parasites and/or does not have evidence of current vaccinations to provide to the school.**

If a principal or designee excludes a service animal from school property, the principal or designee must document the reasons for the exclusion and notify the superintendent. The superintendent or designee will make a determination on whether a service animal will be allowed to return to the school and, if reasonably possible, notify the individual with the disability in writing of the decision within five work days of the initial exclusion.

If the superintendent determines that an animal does not meet the definition of a service animal or that a service animal should be excluded for one or more of the reasons

described in this section, the student's Section 504 or IEP Team shall meet to consider and document whether the animal's presence is necessary for the child to receive an appropriate education or to have equal access to the educational program and, if not, whether the child needs other aids and services or accommodations.

If a service animal is excluded, an individual with a disability will be provided the opportunity to participate in educational services, programs or activities as required by law without having the service animal on the premises.

F. APPEAL OF AN EXCLUSION OF A SERVICE ANIMAL FROM SCHOOL PROPERTY

The superintendent's decision regarding exclusion of a service animal from school property in accordance with this policy may be appealed consistent with policy 1720/4015/7225, Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Complaint Procedure, and any other procedure established by the superintendent under policy 1730/4022/7231, Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disabilities.

Legal References: Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. 12101 *et seq.*, 28 C.F.R. pt. 35; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. 1400 *et seq.*, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 705(20), 794, 34 C.F.R. pt. 104; G.S. 130A-185, 168 art. 1, 168A-3 through -7

Cross References: Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Compliant Procedure (policy 1720/4015/7225), Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disabilities (policy 1730/4022/7231), School Volunteers (policy 5015), Visitors to the Schools (policy 5020)

Adopted:

Revised: