

THERAPY DOGS

The school district supports the use of therapy dogs by teachers or other qualified school personnel (“owner/handler”) for the benefit of its students subject to the conditions of this policy.

A ‘Therapy Dog’ is a dog that has been individually trained and certified to work with its owners/handlers to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship to school district students. Social Service Dogs, for the purposes of this policy, are not “service animals” as that term is used in the American with Disabilities Act.

Therapy Dogs are personal property of the teacher or employee and are not owned by the school district. Only district sponsored service dogs are allowed on school property.

Therapy Dog Standards and Procedures. The following requirements must be satisfied before a therapy dog will be admitted into the district sponsored therapy dog program and allowed in school buildings or on school grounds:

Requests:

All individuals who wish to apply for a district sponsored therapy dog in training will have to fill out the application which will be reviewed by the Social Service Dog Program Committee established by the superintendent for that purpose. (A copy of the application is attached.) An interview will also be required. After completion of the application and interview, a recommendation will be made to the superintendent to deny or accept the request.

Training and Certification:

The owner must follow all training recommendations from the Committee. This will include Puppy Socialization Class, American Kennel Club’s Canine Good Citizen and Therapy Dog International Certification for Social Service Dogs. The owner must submit a copy of each certification to Central Office annually. The certifications must remain current at all times that the Social Service Dog is present in school.

Health and Vaccinations:

The therapy dog must be clean, well groomed, in good health and immunized against diseases common to dogs. Initially, the owner must submit proof of current licensure from the local licensing authority and proof of therapy dog’s current vaccinations and immunizations from a licensed veterinarian.

Control:

A therapy dog must be under the control of the teacher or school employee through the use of a leash or other tether unless the use of a leash or tether would interfere with the therapy dog’s safe, effective performance of its work or tasks.

Identification

The therapy dog must have appropriate identification clearly indicating that it is a therapy dog.

No Disruption

The therapy dog must not disrupt the educational process by barking, seeking attention, or engaging in any other disruptive behavior.

Health and Safety

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

Supervision and Care of Social Service Dogs

The owner 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. Social service dogs that are part of the Wynantskill UFSD therapy dog program will be required to have designated 'co-handlers' whose role it will be to assist with the care of the dog and its integration into the entire school community.

Authorized Area(s)

The owner shall only allow the therapy dog to be in areas in school buildings or on school property that are authorized by school district administrators.

Insurance

District sponsored therapy dogs are covered under the district's insurance policy.

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 presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school; or
3. The animal's presence otherwise interferes with the educational process.

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

Allergic Reactions

If a student or school employee assigned to a classroom in which a therapy dog is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the therapy dog, the owner of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location, designated by an administrator.

Wynantskill UFSD

Adoption date: September 21, 2023