

Concord School District Policy #790

Therapy Dogs

A “therapy dog” is a dog that has been individually trained and certified to work with its (employee) owner or handler to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort or companionship to District students. Research has shown that therapy dogs support psychological and academic growth while increasing social skills and self-esteem in children and adolescents. Therapy dogs have been trained to provide emotional support which positively impacts reading skills, emotional functioning and communication skills. In addition, the use of therapy dogs may decrease anxiety, improve self-esteem and increase overall academic achievement in students.

Therapy dogs are not “service animals” as that term is used in the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). The therapy dog must be well-behaved and have a temperament suitable for interaction with students and others in a public school. Therapy dogs are the personal property of the employee or handler and are not owned by the District.

- I. **Therapy dog standards and procedures.** The following requirements must be satisfied before a therapy dog will be allowed in school buildings or on school grounds:
 - a. **Request:** At the request of the Principal or Principal’s designee, an employee or handler who wishes to bring a therapy dog to District property shall submit a completed written request form to the Superintendent or Superintendent’s designee, for approval. request shall be submitted for approval each school year and/or whenever the employee or handler wishes to use a different therapy dog. Such approval may be rescinded at any time at the sole discretion of the Superintendent. Once the Superintendent or designee approves the request, a plan for dog visits shall be developed with the Principal or Principal’s designee.
 - b. **Training and certification.** The employee or handler shall submit proof of registration as a therapy dog handler with each therapy dog he or she plans to bring to the District. Such registration shall be from an organization that requires an evaluation of the therapy dog and employee or handler prior to registration and on-going evaluation as required for registration. The certification must remain current at all times.
 - c. **Health and vaccination.** The therapy dog must be clean, well-groomed, in good health, housebroken, and immunized against diseases common to dogs. The employee or 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 under the control of the employee or handler through the use of a leash or other tether unless the use of such item would interfere with the therapy dog’s safe, effective performance of its work or tasks. However, the therapy dog must be under the employee’s or handler’s control at all times.

- e. **Identification.** The therapy dog must have appropriate identification as a therapy dog. If not an employee, handlers shall wear a visitor's pass while in the school, and any other appropriate identification provided by the registering organization.
- 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 employee or handler is solely responsible for the supervision and care of the therapy dog, including any feeding, exercising and cleanup while the animal is in a school building or on school property. The District is not responsible for providing any care, supervision or assistance for a therapy dog.
- i. **Authorized area(s).** The employee or handler shall only allow the therapy dog to be in areas in school buildings or on school property that are authorized by District administrators.
- j. **Insurance.** The employee or handler must submit a copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on school property, naming Concord School District as an additional insured on the policy.
- k. **Exclusion or removal from school.** A therapy dog may be excluded from school property and buildings if a school administrator determines that:
 - i. The employee or handler does not have control of the therapy dog;
 - ii. The therapy dog is not housebroken;
 - iii. The therapy dog presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school; or
 - iv. The animal's presence otherwise interferes with the educational process.The employee or handler shall be required to remove the therapy dog from school premises immediately upon such a determination.
- l. **Allergic reactions.** If any student or school employee assigned to a classroom in which a therapy dog is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the therapy dog, the employee or handler of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location designated by an administrator. If a student has an aversion to or a fear of dogs, the employee or handler will remove the therapy dog to a designated area assigned by the building Principal or designee.
- m. **Damages to school property and injuries.** The employee or 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 therapy dogs in training that are accompanied by a bona fide trainer.