

SHALER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

No: 719.1

SECTION: PROPERTY

TITLE: THERAPY DOGS IN SCHOOLS

ADOPTED: NOVEMBER 20, 2019

719.1 THERAPY DOGS IN SCHOOLS	
1. Authority	<p>The school district supports the use of therapy dogs for the benefit of its students subject to the conditions of this policy. Benefits from working or visiting with a therapy dog include reduced stress, improved physical and emotional well-being, low blood pressure, decreased anxiety, improved self-esteem and normalization of the environment, increasing the likelihood of successful academic achievement by the student. 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 training to respond to, and reading to the dog.</p>
2. Definition	<p>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 function of an individual.</p> <p>A therapy dog is a dog that 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 the same as “emotional support animals” or “service animals”.</p>
3. Delegation of Responsibility	<p>The handler is an individual school district staff member or volunteer who has been individually trained, evaluated, and registered with the therapy dog to provide animal assisted activities, animal assisted therapy, and animal assisted interactions within a school or other facility.</p> <p>The handler shall assume full responsibility for the therapy dog’s care, behavior, and suitability for interacting with students and others in the school while the therapy dog is on school district property.</p>
4. Guidelines	<p>The following information will be kept current and submitted to the Board of School Directors by the handler:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The proof of registration as a therapy dog handler with the individual therapy dog to be used. (Note: Such registration shall be from an organization that requires an evaluation of the therapy dog and handler prior to registration and at least every two years.)• Proof from a licensed veterinarian that the therapy dog is in good health and has been immunized against diseases common to dogs. Such vaccinations shall be kept current and up to date at all times.

- Proof of licensure from the local dog licensing authority.
- Copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the work of the handler and therapy dog while the two are on school district property. If an independent agency or person is contracted to provide a therapy dog, such agency or person shall provide such insurance that designates the District as an additional insured provided with primary, non-contributory coverage.

Therapy Dog Standards & Procedures:

Registration: The therapy dog shall have registration from an organization that requires an evaluation of the therapy dog and handler at least every two years and shall remain current and in good standing at all times.

Health & Vaccinations: The handler shall submit proof from a licensed veterinarian that the therapy dog is in good health and has been immunized against diseases common to dogs. Such vaccinations shall be kept current and up to date at all times.

Licensing: The handler and therapy dog shall wear appropriate identification issued by the school district.

Health & Safety: The Administration shall ensure that the therapy dog does not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school and that the therapy dog is brought to the school district only when properly groomed, bathed, free of illness or injury and of the temperament appropriate for working with children and others in the schools.

Control: The handler shall ensure that the therapy dog wears a collar or harness and a leash no longer than four feet and shall maintain control of the therapy dog by holding the leash at all times that the therapy dog is on school district property, including during breaks, unless holding such leash would interfere with the therapy dog's safe, effective performance of its work or tasks. However, the handler shall maintain control of the therapy dog at all times.

Supervision & Care of the Therapy Dog: The handler shall be solely responsible for the supervision and humane care of the therapy dog, including any feeding, exercising, and cleaning up after the therapy dog while the therapy dog is in the school building or on school property. The handler shall not leave the therapy dog unsupervised or alone on school property at any time.

Authorized Area(s): The handler shall ensure that the therapy dog has access to only such areas of the school building or properties that have been authorized by school district administrators.

Allergies & Aversions: The handler shall remove the therapy dog to a separate area, as designated by the school administrator, in such instances where any student or school employee who suffers dog allergies or aversion is present in an office, hallway, or classroom.

Recordkeeping: Handlers who are school district staff shall sign in their therapy dog upon arrival and sign him/her out on their departure.

Damages & Injuries: The handler shall assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to school property or injury to district staff, students, or others in the school caused by the therapy dog.

Notification: The handler shall seek approval from the Building Principal prior to bringing the therapy dog into school. The request for administrative approval should include the date(s) and times on/during which the therapy dog will be present, the identification of the handler responsible for the therapy dog, the area (e.g., classroom, counselor's office, etc.) in which the therapy dog will interact with students and any other limitations or conditions to be established.

Additionally, an annual notification shall be included in the parent/student handbook or episodically in advance of a scheduled presence of the therapy dog to allow parents the opportunity to present any concerns to having their student interact with the therapy dog and for the district to plan for and implement any necessary accommodation.

Exclusion or Removal from School District Property: A therapy dog may be excluded from school district property if a school administrator determines that: (1) The 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; or (4) The therapy dog's presence otherwise interferes with the educational program. The handler shall immediately remove his/her therapy dog from school property when instructed to do so by a school administrator.