

THERAPY DOGS IN THE SCHOOL

Policy #383.2

Waunakee Community School District

The Waunakee Community School District supports the use of therapy dogs by school personnel or other qualified individuals (hereinafter referred to as “handler”) for the benefit of its students, subject to the conditions of this policy.

A “therapy dog,” as defined by this policy, is a dog that has been individually trained and certified to work with its handler to provide emotional support, well-being, or comfort to school district students. Therapy dogs are the personal property of the handler and are not owned by the District. Therapy dogs are not “service animals” as defined within the Americans with Disabilities Act. The use of service animals in the schools is governed by District Policy 383.1. Therapy dogs are meant to help all students and are not specifically identified as support for those students with documented disabilities.

Therapy Dog Standards and Requirements

The following requirements must be satisfied before a therapy dog is allowed in school buildings or on school grounds:

- The therapy dog must be at least one year old.
- Only therapy dogs that are certified through an organization recognized by the American Kennel Club Therapy Dog program will be approved.
- The therapy dog must be properly licensed in the county in which they are kept. They must wear their license identification tag at all times.
- The therapy dog must be clean, well groomed, in good health, housebroken, immunized against diseases common to dogs and free from fleas, ticks or any external parasites.

Submission of Written Request.

School staff wishing to invite a therapy dog and handler to school should submit a written request to the district administrator or designee that includes the following:

- Identification of the classroom or school that will be visited by the therapy dog and handler.
- Confirmation that parents were asked about student allergies.

A handler wishing to bring a therapy dog to school must submit their written request to the district administrator or designee. Prior approval must be secured before the animal may be presented. The request must be renewed each school year, or whenever a different therapy dog is used. **The building administrator will submit a written request if an outside agency is contacted for service.**

The written request to bring a therapy dog into the school shall include the following:

- Current certification from an organization recognized by the American Kennel Club Therapy Dog program.
- Current dog license from the county where the dog is kept.
- Certification from a licensed veterinarian that the dog is at least one year old, in good health and free from fleas, ticks or any external parasites.
- Proof of current vaccinations and immunizations.
- Handlers must submit a copy of the insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on school property.

The district reserves the right to deny the request to bring a therapy dog into a school. School staff will be notified in advance of approved requests to bring a therapy dog into the school.¹

Liability Insurance

The handler of a therapy dog is responsible and liable for any damage to school property or injury to personnel, students, or others caused by the therapy dog.

Health and Safety

The therapy dog must not pose a health or safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school. Health risks include allergies. Parents and ~~adult~~ students will be asked in advance about allergies. 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 handler of the animal will be required to remove the animal to an alternative location designated by an administrator if such location is available.

Behavior Expectations and Control

Therapy dogs must be well behaved and have a temperament that is suitable for interaction with students and others in a public school. The therapy dog should not display any behavior infringing on the rights of others or disrupting the educational process, including sniffing, begging, growling, barking, wandering, jumping or any other rude behavior. When there is a difference between their governing therapy organization or the school system policy/procedure, the handler must abide by the more stringent rules.

A therapy dog must be under the control of the handler or **trained designee** through the use of a 4-ft leash or other tether. The handler shall only allow the therapy dog to be in areas in school buildings or on school property that are authorized by school administrators.

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.

Exclusion or Removal of a Therapy Dog from School Property

The goal of the presence of a therapy dog is to positively enrich the learning environment. Any deviation from this will result in removal of the therapy dog from the school property. A therapy dog may be excluded from school property and buildings if a school administrator determines that:

- A handler does not have control of the therapy dog;
- The therapy dog is not housebroken;
- The therapy dog presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school; or
- The dog's presence otherwise interferes with the educational process.

Legal References:

Wisconsin Statutes

[Section 95.21\(2\)](#)

[Section 174.02\(1\)](#)

[Section 174.07\(1\)](#)

Cross References: 383.1 Service Animals in the School

¹ All staff should be notified so that staff with dog allergies might seek accommodations.

Adopted: