

IMGB - THERAPY ANIMALS

Category: Recommended

Related Policies: IMGA

A. General Policy.

The District recognizes that specially trained therapy animals can provide educational benefits for District students. The School Board authorizes the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designer to allow appropriate staff to make a therapy animal available to students during the school day only as provided in this policy.

This policy is not intended to, and does not, allow students, parents, or staff to bring emotional support or comfort animals onto District property. Individuals, who bring onto District property an animal that does not meet the definition of a service animal under policy IMGA or that has not been approved under this policy, shall be asked to remove the animal from District property. Repeated violations may result in disciplinary or legal action.

B. Definitions.

Service animals. See Board policy IMGA.

Therapy animal. An animal that has graduated from an assistance animal training program affiliated with Therapy Dogs International or a similar nonprofit organization which adheres to the highest training standards. Such a graduate animal has been trained specifically for the purpose of providing emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship. Therapy animals are the personal property of a District employee or volunteer and are not owned by the District. Therapy animals do NOT meet the definition of "service animals" under Board policy IMGA or the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Therapy animal handler. An employee of the school district or volunteer who has received training and passed an evaluation from Therapy Dogs International or a similar nonprofit organization for handling a specific therapy animal and who will be overseeing care of that specific therapy animal for the entire time the animal is on District property.

C. Minimum Standards Required for Presence of a Therapy Animal.

1. No therapy animal will be permitted in school buildings or on school grounds during the school day unless and until prior approval has been given by the Superintendent/designee.
2. District employees will not receive any additional pay, stipend, or compensation for providing the therapy animal or for being the handler and/or the owner of the therapy animal.
3. Supervision and care of the approved therapy animal is solely the responsibility of the therapy animal handler(s) and the District staff who request approval for a therapy animal.
4. The therapy animal handler will assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to District property or injury to District staff, students, or others while the therapy animal is on District property.
5. The therapy animal handler must maintain an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy animal while on District property.
6. Approved therapy animals must be clean, well-groomed, in good health, housebroken, and be current on all vaccinations and immunizations.
7. The therapy animal shall display appropriate identification indicating it is a therapy animal at all times while on District property.

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8. The therapy animal shall be under the control of the therapy animal handler(s) at all times, which requires the therapy animal be attached to the therapy animal handler by means of a leash or harness whenever the therapy animal is on District property and outside of the approved location.
9. At no time will a therapy animal be taken through a District building to meet with a student. Students who have time scheduled with a therapy animal shall go to the room where the therapy animal is located.
10. A student shall not schedule or attend a session with the therapy animal until the student's parent/guardian, or the student if over eighteen (18) years of age, provides written authorization for the student to use the services of a therapy animal.

D. Aggressive or Defensive Behavior.

The building Principal is to receive a verbal report within fifteen (15) minutes of any act of aggressive - including vocalizations such as growling - or defensive behavior by a therapy animal toward a human or any aggressive or inappropriate behavior by a student toward a therapy animal. A full written incident report shall be submitted to both the building Principal and the Superintendent, or designer, before the close of the following school day.

An act of aggressive or defensive behavior by a therapy animal shall result in:

1. An immediate end of the student's current session with the therapy animal;
2. The prohibition of any further interactions between the therapy animal and students for the remainder of the school day; and
3. Exclusion of the therapy animal from District property until the superintendent, or designee, completes an investigation and authorizes the therapy animal's return.

E. Allergic Reactions.

If a student has a known allergy to the therapy animal, the student shall not have any sessions with the therapy animal without the specific written authorization of the student's parent/guardian, or the student if over eighteen (18) years of age.

If a student demonstrates symptoms of an allergic reaction during or after a session with the therapy animal, the student's parent/guardian shall receive written notification of the possibility of their student's allergy and that the student shall not have any future sessions with the therapy animal.

If other students in the same classroom demonstrate symptoms of an allergic reaction following a student's return to class after a session with the therapy animal, no further sessions with the therapy animal shall be scheduled for any student in that classroom and the parents of any student who demonstrated symptoms of an allergic reaction shall receive written notification of their student's possible allergy.

F. Therapy Animal Proposal.

1. **Requirements.** Any individual seeking to bring a therapy animal into a school building or onto other School District property during the school day shall submit a written proposal to the Superintendent/designee addressing each of the following areas:
 - a. **Location Information.** The location for the therapy animal to be kept when the therapy animal is on campus must meet all of the following conditions:

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- i. Appropriate access to the outdoors to permit the therapy animal to enter and exit the building without using - or with minimal usage of - the building's interior hallways;
 - ii. Ample space away from intake for the building or room ventilation system or an independent ventilation system;
 - iii. Non-porous surfaces, including carpet-free floors, for easy hair removal, cleaning, and sanitation.
 - b. **Appropriateness of Animal and of Certification Providers.**
 - i. The certification the proposed therapy animal has received, including the training required to receive the certification;
 - ii. The credentials of the certification providers;
 - iii. Satisfactory evidence of appropriate temperament of the proposed therapy animal (e.g., AKC Temperament Test or other temperance evaluation(s);
 - iv. The credentials of the temperance evaluator(s);
 - v. Proof demonstrating the therapy animal is current on all vaccinations.
 - c. **Therapy Animal Handler.**
 - i. The individual(s) who will be responsible for handling the therapy animal;
 - ii. Training obtained by the proposed handler(s);
 - iii. The credentials of the providers of the handler's training;
 - iv. Proposed schedule for the handler(s) to provide necessary care for the therapy animal, including exercise, feeding, watering, bodily functions, and any cleanup resulting from caring for the animal; and
 - v. Proof of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy animal while on District property.
 - d. **Students.**
 - i. The set(s) of students whom the therapy animal is intended to serve and/or to whom the animal will be available;
 - ii. Proposed training to be provided to students on the appropriate behavior and treatment of the therapy animal;
 - iii. Consequences for inappropriate treatment of the therapy animal;
 - iv. The anticipated goals for and intended uses of the therapy animal.
2. **Administrative Discretion.** The Superintendent/designee may reject the proposal if:
 - a. The proposal does not include sufficient information regarding each of the areas identified in Section F.1, above, or does not otherwise meet the requirements of this policy;
 - b. The Superintendent/designee does not perceive any educational benefit to be achieved based on the information contained in the proposal;
 - c. The Superintendent/designee believes that the time required to meet the needs of the therapy animal is inconsistent with the assigned duties of the school employee either proposed as the therapy animal's handler or in whose class/activity the therapy animal would be present; or
 - d. The proposal is otherwise inconsistent with the needs of the school or school building.
3. **Approval.** The approval of a proposal must be in writing with the proposal attached, and with any additional requirements or modifications imposed by the Superintendent/designee. The written approval is required before the therapy animal may be present in school, or on School District property, during the school day.

District Policy History:

First reading: December 17, 2024
Second reading/adopted: January 7, 2025
District revision history:

Legal References:

Federal Statutes	Description
20 U.S.C. § 1400-1417	<u>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</u>
29 U.S.C. 794	<u>Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)</u>
42 U.S.C. 12101, et seq.	<u>Title II of The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990</u>

Legal References Disclaimer: These references are not intended to be considered part of this policy, nor should they be taken as a comprehensive statement of the legal basis for the Board to enact this policy, nor as a complete recitation of related legal authority. Instead, they are provided as additional resources for those interested in the subject matter of the policy.