

REGULATION

2021

8250R

1 of 6

Instruction

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING THE USE OF THERAPY ANIMALS IN DISTRICT FACILITIES

The Westhill Central School District supports the use of Therapy Animals by qualified handlers for the benefit of its students and staff, subject to the conditions stated below.

A "Handler" is a person who has been individually trained, evaluated, and registered with a Therapy Animal to provide animal assisted activities, animal assisted therapy and animal assisted interactions within a school or other facility. A Therapy Animal's Handler may be the animal's owner, or an individual other than the animal's owner. The Handler must be at least 18 years of age.

"Therapy Animals" are animals used to provide comfort, companionship and therapeutic benefits and are under the direction and control of a qualified Handler who works with the animal as a team. Therapy Animals, for the purposes of this policy, are not "emotional support animals" or "service animals" as that term is defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The District has complete discretion over whether to allow Therapy Animals on campus.

"Therapy Dogs," a type of Therapy Animal, are dogs trained, tested and certified to provide specific physical or therapeutic functions under the direction and control of a qualified Handler who works with the dog as a team. Therapy Dogs, for the purposes of this policy, are not "emotional support animals" or "service animals" as that term is defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The District has complete discretion over whether to allow Therapy Dogs on campus.

Therapy Animals are the personal property of their owner or Handler and are not owned by the District.

Therapy Animal Standards and Procedures

The following requirements must be satisfied before a Therapy Animal will be allowed in District facilities or on the grounds of the District:

1) Requests and Administrative approval:

All individuals who wish to bring a Therapy Animal to school must submit a written letter of request to the Superintendent of Schools and the building principal for the school in which the Therapy Animal and Handler will be working. The request must be renewed each school year or whenever a different Therapy Animal will be used.

(Continued)

REGULATION

2021

8250R

2 of 6

Instruction

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING THE USE OF THERAPY ANIMALS IN DISTRICT FACILITIES (Cont'd)

The use of the animal or animals must be approved by the Superintendent of School and building principal for the school in which the Therapy Animal and Handler work. A letter stating this approval should be written and kept on file in the building. Any concerns regarding the Therapy Animal should be directed to the building principal.

2) Types of Animals:

The following breeds/mixes of dogs may not be used as a Therapy Dog in the District: Akita; American Pit Bull/Staffordshire Terrier; Alaskan Husky/Alaskan Malamute; Bull Mastiff; Chow; Doberman Pinscher; German Shepherd; Great Dane; Huskies - all breeds; Press Canaries (Canary Dog); Rottweiler; St. Bernard; Wolf Hybrid. Animals must be fully domesticated and cannot be a mix of domesticated and non-domesticated species. Species that are venomous or have constrictor capabilities may not be used as Therapy Animals. The District reserves the right to make the final determination regarding the type of animal and ability to participate in the program, and to modify this list of prohibited animals as needed.

3) Training and Certification:

The owner of the Therapy Animal must submit at least one of the following:

1. American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizen Certification;
2. Alliance of Therapy Dogs Registration (previously Therapy Dogs Incorporated);
3. Therapy Dogs International (TDI) Certification;
4. Pet Partners registration;
5. Love on a Leash certification; or
6. Other equivalent training and/or certification, at the discretion of the Superintendent of Schools.

4) Hygiene and Vaccinations:

The Therapy Animal must be clean, well groomed, in good health, spayed or neutered, housebroken, and immunized against diseases common to their species. The Therapy Animal must remain free of intestinal parasites, fleas, ticks, mites and lice. The owner or Handler must submit proof of current licensure from the local animal licensing authority, where applicable; and proof from a licensed veterinarian that the Therapy Animal's vaccinations and immunizations are current. These records will be kept on file with the Superintendent of Schools.

(Continued)

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING THE USE OF THERAPY ANIMALS IN DISTRICT FACILITIES (Cont'd)

The following hygiene guidelines will be observed in District facilities:

- Participants shall wash hands before and after contact with animals, animal products or feed or animal environments.
- Human-animal contact shall always be supervised.
- Animals shall not be allowed to roam free.
- Specific: areas shall be designated for animal contact.
- Food shall not be allowed in animal contact areas, and animals shall not be allowed in areas where food and drinks are prepared, served or consumed.
- All areas where animals and animal products have been present shall be cleaned (and disinfected as necessary).

5) Responsibility of the Therapy Animal Handlers:

1. Handlers should evaluate their animal's health and attitude before each working day.
2. Handlers must be aware of the places Therapy Animals are allowed in each facility.
3. Handlers shall always clean up after the Therapy Animal, inside and outside the facility.
4. **Students are NEVER to be left alone with a Therapy Animal;** a designated Handler must always be present.
5. No students should be permitted to give treats or other food to the Therapy Animal.
6. Handlers shall always be alert to signs of stress in the Therapy Animal, and will promptly remove the animal from the District facility if it shows such signs.
7. When working with disabled persons, the Handler(s) will assist in commanding and handling the Therapy Animal.
8. The Handler shall never knowingly put the Therapy Animal in questionable or threatening situations.
9. All Handlers are responsible for reading, understanding and following these guidelines to provide a safe environment for the Therapy Animal and students.

6) Control:

A Therapy Animal must be under the control of the Handler through the use of a leash or other tether. The Therapy Animal must not disrupt the educational process by engaging in disruptive behavior. This includes, but is not limited to, barking or other vocalization that disrupts the educational process. At the District's discretion, a Therapy Animal who disrupts the educational process in any way will not be considered under the control of its Handler, and will be immediately removed from District property.

(Continued)

REGULATION

2021

8250R

4 of 6

Instruction

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING THE USE OF THERAPY ANIMALS IN DISTRICT FACILITIES (Cont'd)

7) Identification:

The Therapy Animal must have appropriate identification clearly indicating that it is a Therapy Animal.

8) Health and Safety:

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

The District will comply with Education Law Section 809 and any applicable Board of Education policies regarding animals in schools. Each Building Principal shall develop and implement protections and accommodations for Therapy Animals, including but not limited to restrictions on the length of time an animal can "work," length and number of outdoor breaks, access to water and food, clean-up and disposal of waste, and a plan of action for a fire drill or emergency event.

9) Supervision and Care of Therapy Animals:

The Handler is solely responsible for the supervision and care of the Therapy Animal, including any feeding, exercising, and clean up while the animal is in a District facility or on District property. The District is not responsible for providing any care, supervision, or assistance for a Therapy Animal. The Handler will have primary responsibility in relation to cleanup for the Therapy Animal. Medical and nutritional needs of the Therapy Animal is the sole responsibility of the owner or Handler.

10) Authorized Area(s):

The Handler shall only allow the Therapy Animal to be in areas in District facilities or on District property that are authorized by District administrators.

11) Insurance:

The Handler must submit a copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the Therapy Animal while on District property. A minimum three (3) week notice will be provided to the business office prior to bringing a Therapy Animal on district property.

(Continued)

REGULATION

2021

8250R
5 of 6

Instruction

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING THE USE OF THERAPY ANIMALS IN DISTRICT FACILITIES (Cont'd)

Exclusion or Removal from District Facilities

A Therapy Animal may be excluded from District facilities or District property if an administrator determines any of the following:

1. The Handler does not have control of the Therapy Animal;
2. The Therapy Animal is not housebroken;
3. The Therapy Animal presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school; or
4. The Therapy Animal's presence otherwise interferes with the educational process.

The Handler shall be required to remove the Therapy Animal from the District facilities or District property immediately upon such determination.

Notice to Parents and Employees

The Superintendent or his/her designee shall ensure that District employees and parents of all students in a given District facility are notified in writing prior to a Therapy Animal being used in the facility.

All students and employees shall have the option to opt out of activities involving a Therapy Animal for any reason.

Allergic Reactions

If any student or school employee assigned to a classroom in which a Therapy Animal is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the Therapy Animal, the Handler of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location designated by an administrator. When a student or staff member has a known allergy, efforts will be made by the building principal to host the Therapy Animal activities in an isolated area of the school building, rather than in common areas where exposure is more likely.

Damages to School Property and Injuries

The owner of a Therapy Animal is solely responsible for any damage to a District facility or District property, as well as for any injuries caused to individuals by the Therapy Animal. The owner of a Therapy Animal shall indemnify the District against all losses, claims damages, liabilities, causes of action and expenses (including attorney fees) related to personal injuries to any person or pet, as well as any property damage resulting directly or indirectly from bringing the Therapy Animal into the District facility.

(Continued)

REGULATION

2021

8250R

6 of 6

Instruction

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES REGARDING THE USE OF THERAPY ANIMALS IN DISTRICT FACILITIES (Cont'd)

Therapy Animal Permission Form

Therapy Animal Owner's:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone no. _____

Animal's name _____

Name of Handler (if different than Owner) _____

Species of Therapy Animal (breed if applicable) _____

School(s) in which animal will be used _____

Checklist of Required Documents:

- Administrative Approval Letter (A signed statement of the Superintendent of Schools and building principal's approval for use of the Therapy Animal.)
- Health Records -A copy of the Therapy Animal's Health Records signed by owner and licensed veterinarian and current immunization record.
- Proof of licensure from local animal licensing authority (if applicable).
- Certificate of completion or accreditation by District-approved organization
- Current Certification Date: -----
- Acknowledgement of receipt of Therapy Animal Guidelines (below).

I, _____, have read and understand the District's guidelines and procedures regarding the use of Therapy Animals on District property. By my signature below, I agree to adhere to these guidelines and procedures while working with my Therapy Animal on District property. I hereby indemnify and hold harmless the District against all losses, claims, damages, liabilities, causes of action and expenses (including attorney fees) related to personal injuries to any person or pet as well as any property damage resulting directly or indirectly from bringing my Therapy Animal into the school.

Therapy Animal Owner's Signature · Date

Asst. Sup't for Bus Admin's Signature · Date