

**Policy 604.11: Guidelines for the Use of Professional Therapy Dogs**

**Status:** ADOPTED

**Original Adopted Date:** 07/01/2018 | **Last Revised Date:** 10/28/2024 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 10/28/2024

Professional School Therapy Dogs certified with their owners/handlers as Certified Assistance Dog Teams provide emotional and physical support in the educational setting. These highly trained dogs model good behavior, tolerance, and acceptance. All Certified Assistance Dog Teams in the Dallas Center Grimes Community School District work to support and positively influence student achievement.

**1. Professional Therapy Dogs – definition**

- A. Professional therapy dogs are dogs trained and tested to provide specific physical or therapeutic functions under the direction and control of a qualified handler who works with the dog as a team, and as a part of the handler's occupation or profession.

A professional therapy dog has been temperament tested by a trainer affiliated with an organization recognized as qualified to do temperament training.

- a. Such dogs, with their handlers, perform such functions in institutional settings, community-based group settings, or when providing services to specific persons who have disabilities.
  - b. Professional therapy dogs in the DCG CSD are not family pets that have been certified as pet therapy animals.
- B. Professional therapy dogs have passed a Certification Test administered by a trainer/evaluator recognized by Dallas Center-Grimes CSD for this purpose.

Professional therapy dogs are owned by a professional educator in Dallas Center-Grimes CSD who wishes to use a professional therapy dog to augment his/her educational program.

- a. All costs, care and supervision of the dog is the responsibility of the owner and if the owner leaves the District, the dog goes with them.
  - b. See attached documentation requirements (checklist of information) for Certified Assistance Dog Teams in the DCG CSD.
- C. Professional Therapy Dogs may be used in the school setting on a regular basis when the following documentation is in place;

**Administrative Approval**

- a. The use of the animal or animals must be approved by the superintendent.

**Health Records and Hygiene/Animal Care**

- a. The owner/handler must provide a record of annual vaccinations received by the dog and signed by a veterinarian; these health records should be kept on file in the school building and in the Superintendent's office.
  - 1. The dog should receive a Bordetella vaccination annually; rabies vaccinations and five-way parvo/distemper (DHPP) shall be updated every three years. Please note: dogs less than one year of age or receiving their rabies and parvo vaccinations for the first time shall receive a follow-up vaccine in one year, with vaccinations every three years thereafter.
  - 2. The dog should be given a comprehensive wormer or fecal check for worms annually.
  - 3. The dog should be checked for external parasite control.
  - 4. All owners will give preventive parasite (fleas and ticks) control and heartworm medication year-round. Annual tests for heartworm are required. Prevention should be non-toxic in nature, which is important in a school environment.
  - 5. The dog should be groomed and bathed regularly. For dogs in a working environment, monthly to by-monthly baths are recommended as is a daily brushing. (Good judgement should be used based on the dog's hair, skin, and dander concerns.) The owner/handler must also ensure proper health care through regular (several times weekly) brushing of the dog's teeth, regular nail trimming as needed, and weekly cleaning/checks of the dog's ears.

**Public Access Test Documentation**

- a. A copy of the certification of completion should be kept on file in the school building and in the

Superintendent's office.

1. Records of advanced obedience, agility, or other training may be kept updated in the employee's file.

D. Review of Professional School Therapy Dog Guidance and Procedures:

1. Professional Therapy Dog guidelines and procedures will be reviewed annually with all staff and students of the academic year.
2. Review of guidelines and procedures will take place as needed (determined by the administrator and dog owner/handler) throughout the year.

**2. Proof of Insurance**

A. The privilege to bring the dog into the school setting may be terminated should the handler or dog behave in a way deemed unprofessional or unsafe.

B. When an educator uses a professional therapy dog according to the above guidelines, the educator will be covered by their private insurance policy (minimum \$1 million liability coverage).

C. The owner is solely responsible and liable for any damage to District property or injury to staff, students, or others caused by the professional therapy dog.

These guidelines pertain to Professional Therapy Dogs only. For staff and students requiring the assistance of a "service animal," the District will comply with District Policy No. 105 for Assistance Animals, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Iowa Code Chapter 216C.

---