

2630 – SERVICE ANIMALS

(1) Introduction: The School Board and District recognize that students may be accompanied at school by a service animal when allowed by law and this policy. A student's service animal cannot be brought onto school property without prior knowledge and approval by the school and/or district administration.

~~The student's need for and use of the service animal must be documented in the student's individual education plan (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. A student must be a student with a disability in order to be accompanied by a service animal. If the student has not been previously found eligible under Section 504 or Exceptional Student Education, a team meeting should be held as soon as possible after the request is received to determine if the student is a student with a disability and is eligible under Section 504 or Exceptional Student Education.~~ A service animal is the personal property of the student and/or parents. The district school board does not assume responsibility for training, daily care, or healthcare of service animals.

(2) Service Animal Defined

~~(a) Florida law defines a service animal as "an animal that is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual or other mental disability. The work done or tasks performed must be directly related to the individual's disability and may include, but are not limited to, guiding an individual-person who is visually impaired or blind, alerting an individual-person who is deaf or hard of hearing, pulling a wheelchair, assisting with mobility or balance, alerting and protecting an individual-person who is having a seizure, retrieving objects, alerting an individual to the presence of allergens, providing support and assistance with balance and stability to an individual with a mobility disability, helping an individual with a psychiatric or neurological disability by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors, reminding an individual with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming an individual with posttraumatic stress disorder during an anxiety attack, or doing specific work or performing other special tasks. A service animal is not a pet." The term service animal is limited to a dog or miniature horse. The provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort or companionship do not constitute work or tasks.~~

~~(b) Federal regulations implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act define a service animal as "any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by this service animal must be directly related to the handler's disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purpose of this definition."~~

~~(c) Animals whose sole function is to provide emotional support, comfort, therapy, companionship, therapeutic benefits, or to promote general emotional well-being are not service animals. To be considered a service animal, the animal must perform tasks directly related to the person's disability.~~

(3) Service Animal Standards of Behavior: The service animal must not in any way interfere with the educational process of any student and must not pose a health or safety threat to any student, personnel, or other persons. If the standards for behavior are not met, the service animal will be excluded or removed from the school setting. The behavioral expectations for the service animal and standards by which the request to use the service animal on school premises will be evaluated are as follows:

(a) Public appropriateness. The animal:

1. ~~must be clean, well-groomed, and without an objectively offensive odor; and~~
2. ~~does not urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations.~~

(b) Behavior. The animal:

1. does not solicit attention, visit, or annoy any member of the general public;
2. does not disrupt the normal course of business;
3. does not vocalize unnecessarily (i.e., barking, growling, or whining);
4. shows no aggression toward people or other animals; and
5. neither solicits nor steals food or other items from the public.

(c) Training. The animal:

1. is specifically trained to perform ~~work or more than one tasks~~ directly related to mitigate aspects of the student's disability;
2. works calmly and quietly on harness, leash, or other tether;
3. is able to perform its' tasks in public;
4. must be able to lie quietly beside the handler without blocking aisles, doorways, etc.;
5. is trained to urinate and defecate on command; and
6. stays within twenty-four inches (24") of its handler at all times unless the nature of a trained task requires it to be working at a greater distance.

If a service animal is not under control, is not housebroken, is a direct threat to the health of safety of others or constitutes a fundamental alteration to the natures of the services, program or activity provided by the school, then the service animal will not be allowed to accompany the student to school.

(4) Required Documentation: The following documentation must be required prior to a service animal being allowed at school or other Board property:

- (a) Current IEP or Section 504 Plan. The plan should include an accommodation allowing the student to bring his or her service animal to school, not provision of the animal itself;
- (b) Proof of current rabies vaccination; Current satisfactory health certificate or report of examination from a veterinarian;
- (c) Completed District Service Animal Application Form;
- (e) ~~Current certification as a service animal;~~ and
- (d) Level II clearance for handler, if not the student.

(5) Requested Documentation: The following documentation will be requested, but is not required prior to a service animal being allowed at school or other Board property:

- (a) Documentation of training of the animal as a service animal; and
- (b) Documentation that the animal has proper vaccinations.

(6) Procedures: School principals, in conjunction with district staff will be responsible for:

- (a) Determining whether the service animal meets the standards for acceptance in the school setting;
- (b) Approving the use of a service animal in a school setting;
- (c) Excluding or removing of the service animal from the school setting, if determined necessary; and
- (d) Providing for the appeal of any decision regarding the use of the service animal
 1. In addition to protections in State and Federal law, ~~you can appeal consistent with Policy 5500.15 (Code of Student Conduct).~~ if it is determined by the school principal and school staff that the student may not be accompanied by a service animal, either as part of an initial determination or as part of excluding or removing a service animal, the parent has a right to request reconsideration of that decision by providing written request to the Area Superintendent. The Area Superintendent will review the request, decide if the service animal will be allowed and inform the parent within five days of receipt of the request. The Area Superintendent's decision will be final.

(7) Transportation of the Service Animal: In some cases, as identified on the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan, there may be a need for a student with a disability and their accompanying service dog to access school district transportation. In these cases the following must be considered:

(a) Training

1. The driver and assistant should meet with the animal's owner. The owner is responsible for providing information to the driver and bus assistant regarding critical commands needed for daily interaction and emergency/evacuation.
- ~~2. The animal's owner should provide an orientation to students riding the bus with the service animal regarding the animal's functions and how students should interact with the animal.~~

23. The service animal should practice bus evacuation drills with the student.

(b) Loading/Unloading

- 1. The service animal should board the bus by the steps, not a lift, unless the student uses the lift to enter and exit the bus.

(c) Seating Location

- 1. The service animal should be positioned on the floor, at the student's feet.
- 2. A representative of the Transportation Office will meet with the animal's owner to determine whether the service animal should be secured on the bus with a tether or harness.

(d) Cessation of Transportation

- 1. Situations that would cause cessation of transportation of the service animal include:
 - a. The service animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others;
 - b. The service animal urinates or defecates on the bus; or
 - c. The service animal does not remain in the designated area.
- 2. If transportation is suspended due to any of the above reasons, transportation may be reinstated after additional training or medical issues are resolved.
- 3. Parents should be informed of these consequences prior to the first day of transportation.
- 4. Although transportation may be suspended for the service animal, the school district maintains the responsibility for transporting the student.

(87) Implementation Plan

- (a) Upon approval, the school will work with the animal's owner/handler to:
 - 1. Familiarize the service animal with the campus prior to the actual start date;
 - 2. Orient the service animal to school faculty and students;
 - 3. Implement a schoolwide educational program to educate others on how to behave appropriately around the service animal;
 - 4. Establish an educational program to educate others on proper behavior around a service animal;
 - 5. Establish a place for the service animal to urinate/defecate (individual plan will be developed); and
 - 6. Establish an evacuation plan to include the service animal and practice this plan
- (b) In addition, the school will consider the following in the implementation plan:
 - 1. Establish a resting place for the animal.
 - 2. Establish a rest time for the animal. P.E., lunch and recess (if available) may be especially difficult school periods for a service animal to successfully endure.
 - 3. Identify an alternate accommodation plan in the event the animal's primary handler (if not the student) or the animal is not able to accompany the student with the disability to school.
 - 4. Provide parents with the school district's written procedures for the inclusion of service animals in the school.

Americans with Disabilities Act
Section 413.08, F.S.
28 C.F.R. 35.104

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Approved as to form and legality:



School Board Attorney