

### **ANIMALS IN SCHOOL (THERAPY)**

The Oxford Academy and Central School District (the District), from time to time, may have a therapy dog in District buildings or on its property for pet therapy, comfort, and/or emotional support purposes. Therapy dogs are typically privately-owned pets provided to the school as a voluntary service by the dog's owner-handler or a third-party organization to benefit students. Any dog therapy program must be entirely optional, and therefore, a student may opt-out and thus avoid contact with the dog(s). The Superintendent may:

- A. partner with a therapy dog organization that will provide experienced dog/handler teams, or
- B. work with individuals in the community, such as teachers, administrators, or parents/guardians, who have trained and certified their own pet through an accrediting organization.

#### **Definition**

- A. A therapy dog is any dog that is trained to aid the emotional and physical health of patients in hospitals, nursing homes, retirement homes and other settings and is actually used for such purpose, or any dog during the period such dog is being trained or bred for such purpose and does not qualify under federal or state law or regulations as a service dog.
- B. A therapy dog has received behavioral training to provide emotional support, comfort, companionship and therapeutic benefits to individuals, typically in an institutional setting such as a hospital, nursing home, or school.
- C. A therapy dog is not a service animal as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

#### **Standards and Practices**

- A. The District shall bear no financial responsibility for the care or feeding of a therapy dog.
  - B. The therapy dog must not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other people at school.
  - C. The Superintendent shall designate a liaison for the program who will become knowledgeable of the policies and procedures relative to the Therapy Dog Program. The liaison will be responsible for the coordination of services between the District and the therapy dog organization or owner-handler. The liaison will be responsible for ensuring that the documents have been filed and updated annually, as well as making recommendations to the Superintendent regarding therapy dog applications.
  - D. The Therapy Dog Liaison is:
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Superintendent of Schools

- E. Therapy dogs that will be used for such purpose shall be “certified”. Certification typically implies that the organization/owner-handler has participated in the dog’s training. Training will be from an AKC Recognized Therapy Dog Organization, such as the Canine Good Citizen Certification and/or the AKC Therapy Dog Certification(s). The organization or owner-handler shall provide proof of such certification to the District which shall be kept on file.
- F. The dog owner-handler shall provide the following to the District prior to any activity, event, and/or instruction on District property or at District-sponsored events:
1. Proof of a current liability insurance policy that covers any personal injuries or property damage that the therapy dog causes. It may be reasonable for the owner-handler to reimburse the District for any increase in cost to insurance;
  2. The owner-handler shall provide up-to-date copies of all relevant veterinary records, including proof of vaccinations and that the therapy dog is in good health and free of fleas, ticks, and any other infestation;
  3. The owner-handler shall provide proof of current licensure from the local licensing authority;
  4. The owner-handler shall provide a plan for:
    - a. restrictions on the length of time a dog can “work”;
    - b. length and number of outdoor breaks;
    - c. access to water and food;
    - d. clean-up and disposal of waste;
    - e. a plan of action for a fire drill or other emergency drill(s) or event(s); and
    - f. plan for those students who choose not to participate in the therapy dog program
  5. All records regarding the therapy dog handler will be kept on file in the Campus Main Offices and shall be updated annually.
- G. The therapy dog must be under the control of the owner-handler through the use of a leash or other tether unless the leash or other tether would interfere with the therapy dog’s work or tasks.
- H. The therapy dog is allowed only in those areas designated by District administrators or their designee(s).
- I. The owner-handler will be required to remove the therapy dog to a different location designated by the Administrator in the event a student or employee assigned to the area where the therapy dog is permitted has a known allergy or suffers an allergic reaction to the dog.
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- J. The guidelines for the dog handler shall be as follows:
1. Wash hands after contact with therapy dogs, therapy dog products, or feed or therapy dog environments;
  2. Supervise all human-therapy dog contact;
  3. Not allow the therapy dog to roam free;
  4. Not allow food in therapy dog contact areas, and not allow the therapy dog in areas where food and drinks are prepared, served, or consumed;
  5. Clean and disinfect all areas where the therapy dog and therapy dog products have been present;
  6. Keep the therapy dog clean and free of intestinal parasites, fleas, ticks, mites and any other infestation(s);
  7. Maintain documentation for all sessions, including noting any problems that may have arisen during a specific session. Should a problem arise, the owner-handler shall notify the District Liaison immediately; and
  8. Any other requirements and procedures set forth by the Superintendent or designee.
- K. The owner-handler of the therapy dog is financially responsible for any damages caused by the therapy dog and shall sign a pet liability waiver that indemnifies the school against all losses, claims, damages, liabilities, causes of action and expenses (including attorney fees) related to injuries to any person or pet, as well as any property damage, resulting directly or indirectly from bringing the therapy dog into the school.
- L. The Director of Career & Technical Education and/or Director of Special Education will communicate to students and families regarding the use of therapy dogs by posting such information using its normal outlets, including but not limited to posting information to the District website.
- M. The District may remove and/or exclude therapy dog use at any time, and at its own discretion. The owner-handler shall be required to remove the therapy dog from school premises immediately upon such a determination.
- N. Nothing in this policy shall in any way be construed as limiting a disabled individual's right to their access to, and use of, a service animal under the Americans with Disabilities Act, or under a student's IEP or 504 plan.

Adopted: 7/8/24

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