

ANIMALS IN SCHOOLS

No animal shall be brought to school without prior permission of the building Principal. The School District is committed to providing a high-quality educational program to all students in a safe and healthy environment.

School Principals, in consultation with the Health Services Providers in each building, shall utilize the Department of Public Health publication "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and review student health records to determine which animals may be allowed in the school building. The decision of the Principal shall be final.

Educational Program

Use of animals to achieve specific curriculum objectives may be allowed by the building Principal provided student health and safety is not jeopardized and the individual requesting that the animal be brought to school is responsible for adhering to the "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and any other conditions established by the Principal to protect the health and well-being of students.

Student Health

The health and well-being of students is the District's highest priority. Animals may cause an allergic reaction or otherwise impair the health of students. No animals may be brought to school or kept in the school, classroom, office or common area that may negatively impact the health of any student who must utilize that area. Animals that cause an allergic reaction or impair the health of students shall be removed from the school immediately so that no student shall have their health impaired and each student shall have full access to available educational opportunities.

Animals Prohibited from School

Rabies is a growing problem and any fur-bearing animal is susceptible to this very serious fatal disease. Infected animals can transmit this disease to students and staff. Based on the Massachusetts Departments of Health and Education recommendations the following animals are prohibited from schools within the School District.

Wild Animals and Domestic Stray Animals - Because of the high incidence of rabies in bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes and other wild carnivores, these animals should not be permitted in school buildings under any circumstances (including dead animals).

Fur-Bearing Animals (pet dogs,* cats, wolf-hybrids, ferrets, etc.,) - These animals may pose a risk for transmitting rabies, as well as parasites, fleas, other diseases and injuries.

Bats - Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies. Bat houses should not be installed on school grounds and bats should not be brought into the school building.

Poisonous Animals - Spiders, venomous insects and poisonous snakes, reptiles and lizards are prohibited for safety reasons.

***Exception: Guide, Hearing and Other Service Dogs or Law Enforcement Dogs** - These animals may be allowed in school or on school grounds with proof of current rabies vaccination. Exceptions may be made with the prior approval of the Superintendent of Schools.

USE OF SERVICE ANIMALS BY STUDENTS AND VISITORS

Hull Public Schools recognizes that the School District must make reasonable modifications in its policies, practices, and procedures to permit the use of service animals by individuals with disabilities on School premises and School transportation, as described herein, unless making the *Hull Public Schools*

modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program or activity. Individuals with disabilities shall be permitted to be accompanied by their service animals in all areas of the District's premises where members of the public, participants in services, programs or activities, or invitees, as relevant, are allowed to go.

Definitions:

Under the ADA, a "service animal" is defined 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." Service animals are working animals, not pets.

The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability and may include, but is not limited to:

- Assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired as guide dogs
- Alert individuals with hearing impairments to sounds
- Pull wheelchairs or carry and pick-up items for individuals with mobility impairments
- Assist mobility-impaired individuals with balance, and
- Alert a person with diabetes, epilepsy, or a psychiatric disability to health changes that need immediate attention

An animal whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support is not a "service animal."

State law protects dogs being used, or in training to be used, for individuals who are blind, deaf, or physically disabled.

Use of Service Animals by Students and Visitors

The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall be responsible for developing procedures to accommodate an individual's use of a service animal on District premises and school transportation vehicles.

Staff cannot ask about the nature or extent of the person's disability, require medical documentation, require special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

When it is not obvious that the dog is a service animal, staff may ask only the following two questions:

1. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

The law requires staff take the individual at their word.

Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing services to people using service animals. When a person who is allergic to dog dander or fearful of dogs and a person who uses a service animal much spend time in the same school classroom or area, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible to different locations within the room/facility.

Hull Public Schools shall not be responsible or obligated for the care and/or supervision of a service animal. The handler is responsible for toileting, feeding, walking, and grooming and veterinary care.

Limitations for the Use of Service Animals:

A service animal must be under the control of its handler. A service animal must have a leash, harness or other tether unless the individual's disability prevents them from using such devices or the use of such devices interferes with the service animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the service animal must be under the handler's control by other means such as voice control, signals or other effective means.

Hull Public Schools may request that a person remove a service animal from the premises under the following circumstances:

1. The animal is out of control and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control it;
2. The animal is not housebroken;
3. The animal's presence "fundamentally alters" the nature of the service, program or activity; or
4. The animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others in the school building

The individual or parent/guardian of the student, having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the service animal from the District premises immediately.

If the service animal is excluded from the premises, the school will allow the individual to participate in the activity without the service animal on the premises.

Miniature Horses

The District recognizes that while the definition of "service animal" does not include miniature horses, the Title II regulations implementing the ADA require public entities to make reasonable modifications in its policies, practices, or procedures to allow the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the miniature horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with a disability. In determining whether reasonable modifications can be made, the District must consider the type, size, and weight of the miniature horse and whether the District can accommodate these features, whether the handler has sufficient control of the miniature horse, whether the miniature horse is housebroken, and whether the miniature horse's presence in a specific facility compromises the legitimate safety requirements that are necessary for safe operation. All of the requirements regarding the use of a service animal, as described above, apply to the use of a miniature horse.

Legal references: Americans with Disabilities Act, 28 CFR Part 35, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, & M.G.L. ch 272, § 98A

Therapy/ Emotional Support Dogs in Schools

The Hull Public Schools supports the use of Therapy/Emotional Support Dogs in the school setting. Research has shown that Therapy/Emotional Support Dogs support the psychological and academic growth while increasing social skills and self-esteem in children and adolescents. Therapy/ Emotional Support Dogs have been trained to provide emotional support which positively impacts reading skills, emotional functioning and communication skills. In addition,
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the use of Therapy/Emotional Support Dogs may decrease anxiety, improve self-esteem and increase overall academic achievement in students.

Therapy/Emotional Support Dogs are not categorized as service animals. Therapy/Emotional Support Dogs work with students identified by the district. A Therapy/Emotional Support Dog has been through training and is registered with the handler to provide support to identified activities and interactions within the school. The handler is with the dog at all times and assumes full responsibility for the dog's care, behavior and assessment of ability to interact with students.

Therapy/Emotional Support Dogs are family owned pets with the demonstrated temperament and obedience skills to make social/emotional support visits. Although a Therapy/Emotional Support Dog is a valued companion serving an important purpose, it is not considered a service animal under the law and therefore is not mandated to serve as a service animal in the Hull Public Schools. However, as outlined in this policy, there are situations in which a Therapy/Emotional Support Dog may be permitted into the school.

Specific permission will be obtained through a formal process from the superintendent in conjunction with the school principal in order for a Therapy/Emotional Support Dog to enter a Hull Public Schools building and to interact with Hull Public Schools students or staff. This formal process may include documentation from a medical or mental health professional and/or as part of the 504 plan. Seeking permission applies to any member of the school community including: students, teachers, administrators and other staff.

The Therapy/Emotional Support Dog owner must provide written proof of training and endorsement as a handler of said animal by a Therapy/Emotional Support Dog organization, a current certificate of insurance of the owner, proof of all vaccinations required by Massachusetts Law signed by a practicing veterinarian, and copies of identification tags for the therapy dog.

Therapy/Emotional Support Dogs must be leashed at all times and the endorsed handler must be holding the leash at all times.

Exclusion or Removal from School District Property: A Therapy/Emotional Support Dog may be excluded from the school district property if a school administrator determines that the dog poses a threat to the health or safety of students and staff and/or detracts from the educational programs of the school. The handler shall immediately remove his/her therapy dog from the property when instructed to do so by a school administrator.

Legal References: ADA (2010) and US Code of Federal Regulations: USC 35.136 & 36.302

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