

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF PROFESSIONAL THERAPY DOGS**

### **The Role and Purpose of Certified Assistance Dog Teams in Sterling Public Schools**

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 Sterling Public Schools CUSD #5 work to support and positively influence student social emotional health and achievement.

- A. Professional Therapy Dogs - definition
  - 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.
  - 1. A professional therapy dog has been temperament tested by a trainer affiliated with an organization recognized as qualified to do temperament testing.
    - 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 social emotional needs or a disability.
    - b) Professional therapy dogs in the Sterling Public Schools are not family pets that have been certified as pet therapy animals.
- B. Professional Therapy Dogs have passed a Public Access Test administered by a trainer/evaluator recognized by Sterling Public Schools for this purpose.
  - 1. Professional therapy dogs are owned by a professional educator in Sterling Public Schools CUSD#5 who wishes to use a professional therapy dog to augment his/her education/counseling program according to Board Policy Administrative Procedures:
    - a) Therapy Dog Handler Ethics (6.105-AP)
    - b) Professional Therapy Dogs Vital Information (6.105-E1)
- C. Professional Therapy Dogs may be used in the school setting on a regular basis when the following documentation is in place.
  - 1. Administrative Approval
    - a) The use of the animal or animals must be approved by the administrator(s) of the building(s) in which the Professional Therapy Dog Handler works.
    - b) A letter stating the approval of the Professional Therapy Dog should be written and kept on file in the building. A copy should also be sent to the Superintendent or designee.
  - 2. 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 office of the Superintendent or designee.
      - The dog should receive a bordatella 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.
      - The dog should be given a comprehensive wormer or fecal check for worms annually.
      - The dog should be checked for external parasite control on a regular basis.

- All owners will give preventive parasite (fleas and ticks) control and heartworm medication year-round. Annual tests for heartworm are recommended. Please note: Frontline Plus is recommended due to its non-toxic nature, which is important in a school environment.
- The dog should be groomed and bathed regularly. For dogs in a working environment, monthly to bi-monthly baths are recommended as is daily brushing. (Good judgment 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 trimmings as needed, and weekly cleaning/checks of the dog's ears.

### 3. Public Access Test Documentation

- a) A copy of the Public Access Test certificate of completion should be kept on file in the school building and in the office of the Superintendent or designee.
  - A certificate certifying that the handler and the dog both passed the Public Access Test must be sent by the certifying institution to the Superintendent or designee.
  - Records of advanced obedience, agility, or other training for the Certified Therapy dog may be updated and kept in the employee/handlers employee's file.

### D. Review of Professional School Therapy Dog Guidelines and Procedures:

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

### E. Oversight Committee

A committee of objective person knowledgeable in the use of therapy dogs is established to help with issues and questions that may arise concerning handlers or dogs.

The committee should be made up of the following:

- School Counselor
- Professional Therapy Dog Handler
- Parent Representative
- Building Administrator
- Local Veterinarian (on-call only)
- CGH Love on a Leash Representative

Concerns should be directed to the Building Administrator who will address the issues with the Oversight Committee. The purpose of the Oversight Committee will be to:

- Ensure ongoing training for the Professional Therapy Dogs and handlers is taking place.
- Provide general assistance with questions and answers pertinent to use of Professional Therapy Dogs.
- Review Professional Therapy Dog policies, procedures, and guidelines.
- Educate and communicate with the school community regarding the use and value of Professional Therapy Dogs.

- F. 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.
- G. 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).

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