

LEVITTOWN UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT Policy 3220

USE OF ASSISTANCE ANIMALS

The School District recognizes the importance of service animals and affirms its commitment to allowing the use of these animals by individuals with disabilities on school grounds to facilitate their full participation in and equal access to School District services, programs, and activities. Service animals are distinguished from emotional support, therapy, comfort, or companion animals. The School District will comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations related to service animals.

Additionally, the School District permits the use of therapy dogs on school grounds subject to the conditions of this policy. The use of therapy dogs can have many benefits including reduced anxiety and increased mental stimulation, as well as decreased depression, feelings of isolation, and boredom.

Service Animals

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. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals.

The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. 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 purposes of this definition. Psychiatric service animals that have been trained to take a specific action to help avoid an anxiety attack or to reduce its effects, however, may qualify as a service animal.

Where reasonable, the Board of Education also allows the use of miniature horses on school grounds by individuals with disabilities. This use will only be permitted where a miniature horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks to benefit an individual with a disability. The use of miniature horses by individuals with disabilities is subject to the considerations and restrictions permitted by federal and/or state law.

The Superintendent of Schools or designee may create procedures, regulations, and/or building-specific rules regarding the use of service animals and miniature horses on school grounds by individuals with disabilities.

Therapy Dogs

For purposes of this policy, a therapy dog is defined as a dog that has been trained, evaluated, and certified to work with a handler to provide affection and comfort to individuals in a variety of settings including schools. A handler is defined as an individual that has been trained, evaluated, and certified to work with a particular therapy dog. Therapy dogs are not covered by the same laws that protect service animals.

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Although there is no formal identification or certification for therapy dogs, the School District requires that any therapy dog and accompanying handler permitted on school grounds to be certified by an American Kennel Club (AKC) recognized therapy dog organization such as Therapy Dogs International. Further, the therapy dog must not pose a health and safety risk to any individual on school grounds. In order to use a therapy dog in the School District, a written request must be submitted to the Superintendent of School's or designee. The request must include the following:

1. General information about the proposed use of the therapy dog including when and where;
2. Personal information about the therapy dog and handler including name, address, and phone;
3. Copies of the therapy dog's:
 - a. Current licensure from the local licensing authority;
 - b. Vaccination and immunization records from a licensed veterinarian;
4. Copy of a certification from an AKC recognized therapy dog organization;
5. Copy of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the work of the therapy dog and handler while on school grounds and names the School District as an additional insured.
6. Certification from the handler that, while on school grounds, the therapy dog, will:
 - a. Be clean, well-groomed, and free of parasites, illness, or injury;
 - b. Remain under the handler's control through the use of a leash or other tether unless the use of a leash or other tether would interfere with the therapy dog's service;
 - c. Be supervised and accompanied by the handler;
 - d. Wear a therapy dog ID and/or a bandana;
 - e. Not disrupt the educational process by excessive barking or any other behavior;
 - f. Only go to locations that have been authorized by District administrators;
 - g. Be fed, exercised, and cleaned-up after by the handler.

Additionally, handlers who are not employed by the School District must comply with all requirements for volunteers in the School District. Volunteers will work under the supervision of appropriate staff and are expected to comply with all School District rules and regulations.

Adopted: July 2, 2025