

SERVICE AND THERAPY ANIMALS IN THE SCHOOLS

Animals, in general, are not permitted in school buildings, with the exception of registered service animals and registered animal assisted education animals. The following rules shall govern the use of service animals and animal assisted education (AAE) animals by persons in the schools.

I. Service Animals

A. General Conditions

1. Only qualified individuals with disabilities are eligible to use service animals in school.
2. Use of a service animal by a person with a disability will be allowed in school when the animal is required to perform work or tasks directly related to the individual's disability.
3. "Service animal" is defined in Maine law as follows: A 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 a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. Examples of such work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting an individual who is totally or partially blind with navigation or other tasks, alerting an individual who is 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 an individual to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or a telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to an individual with a mobility disability, and helping a person with a psychiatric or neurological disability 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 purposes of this definition.
4. The District will not be responsible for the training, feeding, grooming or care of any service animal permitted to attend school under this policy (except in the limited circumstances described in Section B.2.a.2). It shall be the responsibility of the individual with a disability or designated handler to ensure the proper care and supervision of the service animal.

5. All service animals must be kept on a harness, leash or tether unless this prevents the animal from performing his/her specific work or tasks with the individual. The animal must be under the control of the individual with a disability or designated handler at all times.
6. The individual with a disability (or in the case of a student, the student's parent(s)) is liable for any damage to school or personal property and any injuries to individuals caused by the service animal.
7. Individuals with service animals may access the same areas that individuals without disabilities are authorized to access.

B. Administrative Review of Service Animals

1. Whenever a service animal is in school or on school property (and it is not obvious that the dog qualifies as a service animal, e.g., guide dog for a blind person), a building administrator or other authorized school official may ask:
 - i. Whether the service animal is required because of a disability;
 - ii. What work or task(s) the animal has been trained to perform.
2. When it is anticipated that a service animal is going to be in the school on a regular basis with an employee, student, volunteer or other frequent visitor to the school, the individual using the service animal (or in the case of a student, the student's parent(s)) are expected to notify the building administrator in advance.
 - i. The school shall not provide staff support to care for or control a service animal, but may provide support to a student using a service animal as needed in a particular instance (i.e., accompanying a young student who takes a service animal outside to relieve him/herself).
 - ii. Any handler (parent or other person) accompanying the service animal must have approval to work in the school from the Maine Department of Education and undergo the State criminal background check.
3. Service animals must be properly licensed and vaccinated.

C. Miniature Horses

Miniature horses are not defined as service animals under state or federal law. However, miniature horses which have been individually trained to perform specific work or tasks may be permitted in the schools in certain circumstances as a reasonable accommodation for a qualified individual with a disability. Any such requests should be directed to the building administrator for consideration. If a miniature horse is approved, all the conditions in this policy shall apply.

II. Animal Assisted Education

A. Definition

1. AAE is a goal-directed intervention designed to promote improvement in cognitive functioning of the person(s) involved and in which a therapy dog team is an integral part of the educational process.
2. AAE is directed and/or delivered by an educational professional with education, licensure, and specialized expertise and within the scope of education. AAE may be provided in a variety of settings, may be group or individual in nature and may be implemented for persons of any age. There are specific educational goals for each individual involved and the process is documented and evaluated by the educational professionals requesting a therapy dog pet partner.

B. Special Conditions

1. Annual health exams, vaccinations, and licensure are required at the cost of the owner and are maintained in the Main Office and Central Office.
2. Also animals participating in the AAE program are here all day during school hours.
3. AAE animals are required to be bathed 24 hours prior to entering the school facilities with a special hypoallergenic shampoo and rinse to lessen allergens.
4. The handler of any AAE animal is responsible for the training, feeding, grooming or care of any service animal permitted to attend school under this policy.
5. Individuals with AAE animals will access the same areas that individuals without AAE animals are authorized to access.

III. Removal or Exclusion of Service and Therapy Animals from School

A. A building administrator or other authorized school official may require that a service or therapy animal be removed from the school or other school property under any of the following circumstances:

1. The animal poses a direct threat to the safety of individuals at school, causes a significant disruption of school activities or otherwise jeopardizes the safe operation of the school;
2. The animal demonstrates that he/she is unable to perform reliably the work or tasks which he/she was represented as being able to perform;
3. The animal is not under the full control of the person with a disability, or the authorized handler.
4. The animal is sick (i.e., vomiting, etc.), infested with parasites, has an infection of the skin, mouth or eyes, or otherwise presents a threat to the public health;
5. The animal demonstrates that it is not sufficiently trained to relieve him/herself outside the school building; and/or
6. The animal's presence significantly impairs the learning of students and/or fundamentally alters the nature of any school program.

Legal References: 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq. 28 C.F.R. §§ 35.104; 35.130(h); 35.136
5 M.R.S.A. §§ 4553; 4592 Maine Human Rights Commission Rule
Chapter 7

Cross References: AC - Non-Discrimination/Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action
ACAA-R – Student Discrimination and Harassment Complaint
Procedure
ACAB-R – Employee Discrimination and Harassment Complaint
Procedure

Revised: June 18, 2012
Revised: January 4, 2016