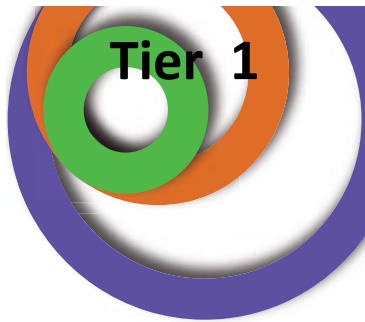


Animals in Schools

Tier 1

Topic Brief, June, 2018

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For a long time, animals have been used in classroom settings by educators to assist with science lessons, to teach responsibility and caring, and to provide a stimulating classroom environment. These animals have included rabbits, gerbils, mice, and fish. However, educators may now be asked to include animals within the classroom as interventions for children to meet a variety of specific goals. These goals include acquiring reading skills, enhancing motivation and attention, and addressing social and emotional disorders (Barker & Dawson, 1998). Animals have also been provided to students with disabilities for a variety of reasons including supporting students who have deficits in mobility, vision, hearing, as well as detecting seizures. The most common uses of animals in school settings are to assist students with physical impairments – visual impairments, cerebral palsy, epilepsy – or other disabilities, such as autism spectrum disorder and learning disabilities (Hill, King, & Mrachko, 2013).

Despite the many benefits, there are concerns regarding animals in schools. Animals in schools may require extensive training and monitoring for the animal and its handler, as well as, for those supervising these activities in schools. Additionally, animals in schools may introduce distractions and even health risks to other students (Friesen, 2010; Johnson, Odendaal, & Meadows, 2002). As a result of both the benefits and risks associated with the inclusions of animals in school settings, there are often policy and legal issues that educators face related to these animals (Huss, 2011). This brief will discuss the different labels of animals in schools and differentiate among the roles they may perform (e.g., service animals, visitation animals, emotional support animals). We will present research regarding the topic of animals in schools and discuss the legal and policy issues that surround them.

Roles of Animals in Schools

Two broad categories of animals have been proposed based on the purpose of the animals – companion animals and assistance animals. Companion animals include pets and mascots and will not be included in our discussion of animals in schools. Our focus will be on the broad category of “assistance animals” and will differentiate among the roles of those animals in schools.

Assistance Animals

Six major categories of assistance animals have been identified and widely accepted based on the function of the animals in society (Parenti, Foreman, Meade, & Wirth, 2013). These are service animals, public service/military animals, therapy animals, visitation animals, recreational animals, and support animals.

Service animals. Service animals have been trained to perform tasks related to an individual's disability. Service animals are afforded public access protections under federal and state laws. Training of service animals varies depending on the tasks needed by the handler. There are currently no legally recognized training standards (Parenti et al., 2013). Individual training programs often provide their own certification of the animal's training based on their standards for performance. The most well-known of these are probably "seeing eye dogs" for individuals with visual impairments, but other services may also be provided by these animals. Generally, access to any public places is allowed, but there are some exceptions such as in churches and on federal, state, or local government property. Exceptions are also made to public access for service animals, if health or safety risks are present, or if the presence of the service animal results in changes to normal business practice (Parenti et al., 2013).

Public service or military animals. Public service or military animals are trained to provide to assist public service or military professionals in carrying out their work. Similar to service dogs, the training of these animals depends on their role. For example, search-and-rescue dogs perform different tasks than drug-detecting dogs, or dogs used to track crime suspects or locate cadavers. These animals would be allowed in schools to the extent that they are performing a necessary service or task for law enforcement or for the school (e.g., drug searches, assisting a police officer, etc.).

Therapy animals. Therapy animals are trained to assist a healthcare professional within the scope of a therapeutic treatment plan. A myriad of professionals may use therapy animals including physical therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. In educational settings, social workers or psychologists could use therapy animals to create a trusting environment, to encourage acceptance and compliance of a behavioral adjustment program, or to provide other social support toward therapeutic goals. While dogs are the most common therapy animal, others include birds, cats, and horses. The purpose of a therapy animal is to assist a service provider in the treatment of a patient or client. Treatments provided by therapy animals include building rapport, facilitating child therapy, or improving gross motor skills through movement (Foreman, Glenn, Meade, & Wirth, 2017). These animals might be allowed in schools on a case-by-case basis, depending on the specific circumstances, and the treatment plan of the therapist for the student. However, therapy animals most typically are employed outside the school setting.

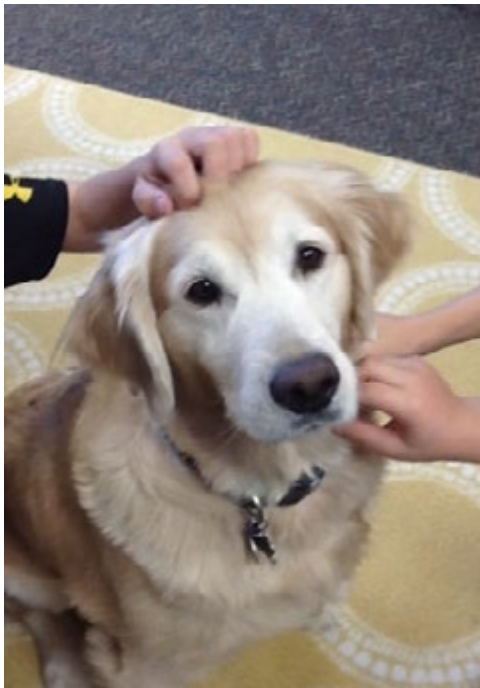


Visitation animals. Visitation animals are trained to provide support and comfort through companionship and social interactions. Typically, visitation animals are utilized in hospitals, nursing homes, and schools. Their purpose is to foster communication and social interaction. Historically, many animals brought to school by educators served this purpose.

Recreational, sporting, or agricultural animals. Recreational animals have also been trained in basic or advanced skills associated with competition, transportation, or recreation such as hunting. Recre-

ational animals do not benefit individuals with disabilities, nor are they able to assist in therapeutic treatment programs. Recreational, sporting, or agricultural animals would not typically be in schools.

Support animals. Lastly, support animals are animals that provide support physically, psychologically, or emotionally to individuals in need (Parenti et al., 2013). Dogs that are used as support animals may also be referred to as emotional support dogs, social therapy dogs, skilled companions, and home-help dogs. These animals “provide companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help with depression, anxiety, or certain phobias” (Brennan & Nguyen, 2014, p. 3). Unlike service animals, they are not providing very specific services, and unlike therapy animals, support animals are not necessarily used at the direction of a therapist or related service professional. Support animals may assist with tasks related to



the day-to-day activities of the owner, primarily at home but also at school. Support animals are afforded legal protections for access to public buildings and housing projects, as well as, private residences.

What Types of Animals Are Included in These Categories?

While the most common animals employed in all of these categories are dogs, it is certainly possible that other animals may be serving these purposes. Typically, service and support animals are smaller animals which can be incorporated in the person’s home or school environment. Currently, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) only recognizes dogs and miniature horses as service animals (28 CFR 35.136(i)(1)). Cats, rabbits, birds, and even large animals such as donkeys and horses, can become support or therapy animals. When horses or donkeys are used for providing therapy to people with disabilities under the supervision of a physical, occupational, or speech and language therapist, the treatment is called hippotherapy (Friesen, 2010). This

use is often to improve balance or muscle tone, as well as, social interaction or communication in an environment where the animal is motivating for the client.

Animals in School Settings

Given the classification of assistance animals provided by Parenti and colleagues (2013), assistance animals are present in schools, particularly when used as service, therapy, visitation, and support animals. For the sake of this paper, we will use to the general term “assistance animals” for these types of animals (i.e., service, therapy, visitation, and support).

Purposes for Assistance Animals in Schools

While animals are classified for the purposes described earlier, the goals of the adults who supply these animals can be divided into two categories – animal-assisted therapy and animal-assisted activity (www.deltasociety.org).

Animal-assisted therapy. Animal-assisted therapy (AAT) is a goal-directed intervention in which an animal that meets specific criteria is an integral part of the treatment process. It is directed and/or deliv-

ered by a health/human service professional with specialized expertise and within the scope of practice of their profession. Key features include specified goals and objectives for each individual and with data gathered for that individual to measure progress (www.deltasociety.org). An example of animal assisted therapy would be an occupational therapist working with a client on fine motor skills by bringing in a pet and prompting the client to pet the animal, put on the leash, undo the collar, and so on.

Animal-assisted activity. This use of animals provides opportunities for motivational, educational, recreation, and/or therapeutic benefits to enhance quality of life (www.deltasociety.org). This type of therapy is delivered in a variety of environments by specially trained professionals, paraprofessionals, and/or volunteers in association with animals that meet specific criteria. Key features include an absence of specific individual child treatment goals and an absence of requirements for volunteers and treatment providers to document results. The visit content is spontaneous and generalized, compared to animal-assisted therapy where outcomes are documented and data is gathered for specific goals. An example of an animal-assisted activity in schools would be the inclusion of eggs in the classroom to educate students on the incubation and hatching processes.

Training, Certification, or Licensing of Animals

The use of animals by individuals who are blind or deaf has a long history that includes commonly-accepted standards for animal and handler training (Brennan & Nyugen, 2014). Procedures and training pertaining to the use of animals to sense medical issues (e.g., student seizures or diabetic reactions) are currently being developed in a similar fashion. Many of the training programs for these types of service animals undertake behavioral screening of the animals, in which animals are selected based on features related to their proposed uses. When the selection and training is complete, these programs certify the animal for the role, and often offer training to the handler or recipient of the service. While these assurances are desirable when available, their absence does not necessarily disqualify a program from being considered therapy.

Questions regarding an animal's suitability for therapy work arise primarily from risk management considerations (e.g., patient safety, liability issues) and concerns about animal welfare. All of these issues apply in schools as well as other locations. A wide variety of recognized organizations exist which train or certify different service animals. A link to the list of common animal therapy organizations is included in the resources provided later in this document. However, there is relatively little government oversight, and few accepted standards, for training and licensing. It is beyond the scope of this brief to address such training or certification.



Ehlana Fry and her service dog Wonder

What Do We Know About Assistance Animals in Schools?

The Delta Society, now known as “Pet Partners,” has served as a main contributor to the research and advocacy of animal-assisted interventions. During the 1970s, this organization identified the need for extensive research within this area. Early findings suggest that time spent with animals has physical, mental, and emotional effects (www.deltasociety.org). Researchers found

that time spent with an animal reduces blood pressure and was associated with an increase of endorphins and enhanced mood (www.deltasociety.org). Studies also suggest that the presence of animals has been found to lower anxiety and motivate individuals to participate in therapy (Chandler, 2001).

While animals have been used in therapeutic contexts for decades, the field of animal-assistance interventions is still defining itself and gaining credibility. One of the early pioneers of animal-assisted therapy, Boris Levinson, centered his work on the incorporation of dogs in his therapy sessions with children as a means to create a more relaxed environment. This work led to therapeutic gains as well as a more conducive environment for self-disclosure (Friesen, 2010). However, inconsistencies in terminology and definitions has been a barrier to this field in gaining credibility and in being able to gather data on individual outcomes. Lack of consensus on terms, training requirements and lack of reliable use of specific practices contribute to this problem (Kruger & Surpell, 2006). Although testimonials support the value of animals for a variety of roles and settings, actual research is sparse, amidst the growth and continued development of animal-assisted therapy.

Research regarding the therapeutic and/or academic benefits of assistance animals in typical classroom environments is also minimal. However, there is a growing body of research regarding the use of assistance animals in special needs classrooms (Friesen, 2010). One example is the use of registered therapy dogs in reading activities, such as the Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D. program implemented by Intermountain Therapy Animals; www.therapyanimals.org). Dogs have been found to provide unique social support to struggling readers (Beck & Katcher, 2003). It has been shown that reading out loud to a dog, may result in decreasing students' blood pressure and heart rate when compared to reading out loud to peers or adults (Friedmann, Thomas, & Eddy, 2000). It also increases a positive attitude toward reading (Kirnan, Siminerio, & Wong, 2016; Linder, Mueller, Gibbs, Alper, & Freeman, 2017). However, results regarding the impact of these canine reading interventions on reading skills such as accuracy and fluency are mixed (e.g., Kirnan et al., 2016; le Roux, Swartz, & Swart, 2014; Linder et al., 2017).

Animals in schools can have a particularly profound impact on students with disabilities. Through a qualitative analysis, Anderson and Olson (2006) found that the presence of a two-year-old toy poodle



Fry family and friends at the U.S. Supreme Court Fry v. Napoleon.

named J.D. led to increased emotional stability, positive attitudes toward school, and increased learning for six students, ranging from 6 to 11 years old, in a self-contained classroom for students with emotional disturbance. O’Haire, McKenzie, McCune, and Slaughter (2014) found that interactions with animals at school led to increases in social performance and attitudes toward school for 64 students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) across 41 classrooms and 15 schools in Brisbane, Australia. Researchers have also found increases in attention span (Beck & Katcher, 1984) and visual attending to an adult in the presence of a dog for eight children with Down syndrome (Limond, Bradshaw, & Magnus, 1997).

Potential Barriers of Assistance Animals in Schools and Recommendations

Despite the perceived benefits and apparent growing popularity of employing animals to assist in achieving therapeutic and academic goals, there are potential problems with the use of animals in schools, many of which can be overcome with preparation and appropriate procedures.

Allergens, cleanliness and health. Issues related to allergens/cleanliness can be reduced by choosing the correct animal and regular grooming. Pre- and post- hand washing should be utilized for all involved. Washing any pillow and blanket that is used by the animal will help reduce dander transfer. If possible, holding sessions outside can be helpful. Pre-arranging that the animal and handler arrive and leave through designated entrances after classes have begun will decrease potential contact with children who do have allergies (Friesen, 2010). It is also important to make arrangements for providing water and an area for the animal to urinate and defecate.

According to federal law, if a person with a disability requires the use of a trained service dog, and other people are allergic or fearful, both individuals should be accommodated by assigning them to different rooms or making other accommodations. Asking a person with a service animal to leave a location because someone else is allergic or fearful is discrimination. If a person who is allergic or fearful around service animals to the degree of needing a reasonable accommodation, then that person would have to follow the same procedural requirements as the person using the service dog.

Safety concerns. A common concern may be the demeanor of the animal and possible injuries from aggression, such as bites, but also for the size or power of the animal and inadvertent accidents which can occur (jumping on students and knocking them over). Bites are a common concern due to the prevalence of dog bites among children (Jalongo, 2008). Animal bites can be prevented by providing age-appropriate lessons to children on how to interact appropriately with assistance animals. Assistance animals are often selected for and trained to have a quiet and calm demeanor; therefore, it is important that children are able to complement the behavior of the animal by learning to interact with it in a gentle manner, learning when and how it is appropriate to approach the animal, learning how to play with the animal if the environment allows for that, and learning the appropriate way to act if the child is afraid of the animal (Friesen, 2010).



Wonder and Fry family at Supreme Court.



Interview with Ehlana Fry after Frye v. Napolian U.S. Supreme Court case.

Recently, some airlines have restricted the free accompaniment of certain animals with passengers in the cabin. For instance, Delta and United airlines announced it would implement additional restrictions on traveling with emotional support animals. “The new policy is aimed at curbing animal behavior such as urinating, defecating, and biting while on board planes. All of those incidents have happened during flights, to the discomfort of passengers forced to sit next to someone carrying a wild or ill-trained animal” (Inman, 2018). The airline will now require documentation of the training, inoculation, and role of the animals in advance of the flight to be sure the animal meets the criteria of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) or Section 504 discussed below.

Disruption/Distractions. Sometimes animals in schools may disrupt other students and activities. These situations can be addressed by preparing others in the environment and establishing specific routines for the animal’s presence. In addition to these potential issues when introducing assistance animals into academic and therapeutic settings, administrators and

staff may have additional concerns that are specific to their school or therapeutic environment; to address additional concerns, arranging an on-site meeting for establishing procedures with the animal and handler will assist in addressing issues early on (Johnson et al., 2002).

Legal or Policy Issues

The use of service animals for students with disabilities is an emerging issue that school districts are likely to encounter when families want animals in schools for their children (Berry & Katsiyannis, 2012). It is important to know when animals are discretionary and when their presence is a legal accommodation. As described earlier, animal-assisted therapies are viable treatment options with some growing evidence that shows positive benefits to psychological well-being (Rabbit, Kazdin, & Hong, 2015).

Currently, there are four laws that provide guidance for the use of animals for service and support: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) with amendments in 2011; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) and the Fair Housing Act (FHA, 1988). Currently, the only legal provision for the use of an emotional support animal is under the Fair Housing Act of 1988, although this law is not pertinent to our analysis, because it does not address schools. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and under Section 504, service animals are a reasonable accommodation. For this reason, discrimination claims regarding the use of service animals in schools are frequently sought under both these laws.

Americans with Disabilities Act. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires schools and other programs, businesses and agencies to provide access to students with disabilities. To that end, the U.S. Department of Justice has developed regulations pertaining to service animals (ADA, 2011). In these regulations, a service animal is any dog or miniature horse 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 (28 CFR 35.136(i)(1)). The animal must be individually trained

to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. Under the regulations, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. There are height, weight, and behavior requirements. Three parts of the ADA include the provision of a service animal as a reasonable accommodation: Title 1, employment; Title 2, public entities (including public schools); and Title 3, private entities if generally open to the public (28 CFR 36.104)- thus these regulations apply more broadly than just in schools.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division published ADA regulations pertaining to service animals. Service animal was 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" (Brennan & Nguyen, 2014, p. 3). As previously mentioned, emotional support animals, comfort animals, and therapy animals are not considered service animals by ADA definition, nor are other types of animals, trained or untrained. Some states have laws that define therapy animals, but they are not covered under federal laws that protect the use of service animals because they aren't limited to people with disabilities. In schools, the regulation of these types of animals is left to school officials.

Section 504. Section 504 essentially has the same requirements as ADA for access to programs and facilities, and as a result, duplicates and supports the requirements of ADA but does not add any further clarification.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. According to a February 2017 United States Supreme Court ruling in the case of Fry vs. Napoleon Community School District, service animals were judged an ADA issue rather than an IDEA/special education one (Wiscarson, 2017). Consequently, if a service animal, as defined by the ADA, provides educational accessibility, then schools are required to allow the animal within the school and classroom setting. Results from this case have given families and education service providers needed clarification on the legal requirements of districts regarding service animals. There is no need to claim the student "needs" a service animal, as is required for other accommodations put into place on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for a student. Under the ADA, service animals can attend school with a student as a reasonable accommodation, and no permission or no discussion of "need" is required (Wiscarson, 2017 p. 2). To be clear, there is nothing which would prevent an IEP team from including an animal as part of the student's IEP, but that is not necessary as the animal's use in school would likely already be included under ADA. Due to these regulations, many districts have developed policies regarding the use of animals within schools (for an example of one district's policy see the appendix).

Conclusion

The use of animals in schools has become an increasingly important topic of discussion, as there are various reasons that animals might be an important component of the school day for our students. Purposes can range from service animals to therapy animals or even recreational or visitation animals. While there are benefits and considerations for all animals in schools, under the current legal mandates, there is only one category of animals that is required be allowed in schools: service animals. The Americans with Disabilities Act has set forth clear regulations stating that service animals must be allowed to accommodate students in schools, regardless of a demonstration for the student's need if the student meets the ADA definition for disability. Outside of those guidelines, individual cities and states have begun to develop various policies and laws regarding therapy and visitation animals in schools that will need to be addressed on an individual basis. A sample school policy related to service animals is attached.



Recommended Citation

Kavan, S., Prince, A., Anderson, M. J., Bricko, N., Hoff, N., & Peterson, R. L. (2018, June). Animals in Schools. Topic Brief. Lincoln, NE: Student Engagement Project, University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the Nebraska Department of Education. <https://k12engagement.unl.edu/animals-schools>.

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Animal Therapy Resources

The following are a representative sample of organizations which train, certify and support a variety of assistance animals. Contact these organizations for more information about their programs. No endorsement is implied as a result of being listed here.

Alliance of Therapy Dogs

877-843-7364

<https://www.therapydogs.com/>

ATD provides registration, support, and insurance for members who volunteer with dogs to visit hospitals, special needs centers, schools, nursing homes, and other facilities. We're a network of caring volunteers who are willing to share our special canines to bring smiles and joy to people, young and old alike.

Angel Dog Program- Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital

800-676-5448

Angel Dogs have been bringing a sense of being at home to patients at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital for more than 15 years. Anxiety, fears, loneliness have been lessened by many individuals who have received visits or met an Angel Dog in the hall. Numerous patients and their families have been given a refreshing welcome change in routine and something different to look forward to during a day filled with therapies.

Animal Behavior Institute

<http://www.animaledu.com/>

ABI was founded in 2004 by Dr. Gary Fortier and Dr. Janis Hammer in order to offer behavioral courses and training online. Our web based, interactive courses allow adult students to obtain professional quality instruction without travel, anywhere, at any time. The courses and programs offered through the Animal Behavior Institute provide individualized instruction, certification, and continuing education credits for animal professionals.

The Bright and Beautiful Therapy Dogs, Inc.

<http://www.golden-dogs.org/>

The Bright and Beautiful Therapy Dogs, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization which evaluates, tests, trains and qualifies owners and their well-behaved dogs as therapy dog teams. These teams give unconditional love, boost self-esteem, and relieve loneliness and boredom. Did you know petting a dog will lower your blood pressure? The benefits are endless. They work in nursing homes, hospitals, psychiatric wards, shelters, schools and many other facilities.

Envisions, Inc.- Equine Therapy Program

402-597-3336

The benefits experienced by individuals with developmental disabilities are due to the special relationship they develop with the horse. The horses are specifically chosen and trained to be gentle, patient, and calm. The unconditional, non-judgmental aspect of the bond between the horse and the individual encourages them to form an attachment and interaction with another living being, which can be difficult for some individuals with Developmental Disabilities. One of the greatest benefits from this type of therapy is the enjoyment consumers get out of it. They don't even realize that they are participating in a therapeutic activity - it's just a lot of fun!

Human Animal Solutions

360-493-2586

Human-Animal Solutions meets your needs for animal-assisted interactions (AAI) programs and services. We are your source for professional therapy services; consultation regarding AAI program development and enhancement; and classes for therapy dogs, handlers, and human health care professionals. We come when called – locally and internationally!

Kearney Animal Assisted Therapy

<http://www.aaponline.org/contact-us/>

This program is a group of volunteers from the Kearney, Nebraska area with dogs, cats and other animals registered with Therapy Dogs, Inc. Inc. and also Pet Partners. Our programs and visits include places for youth such as the public library and numerous daycare providers and schools. We also visit local hospitals, nursing homes, and other

places where we are invited. Kearney Area Animal Assisted Programs also participates in local activities such as parades, camps and other community events.

Love On A Leash

760-740-2326

Love on a Leash® (LOAL) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to providing an avenue for volunteer pet therapy teams to engage in meaningful and productive animal assisted therapy. We provide a framework for therapy teams to obtain the necessary training and certification in order to provide joy, warmth and emotional support to others through pet therapy.

Nebraska Medicine Animal Assisted Therapy

402-552-2000

Our Volunteer Services department coordinates the Animal Assisted Therapy program. This program uses trained Nebraska Medicine volunteers and their adult dogs as a method to reduce stress of hospitalization. We have a variety of therapy dogs and each dog must be a certified therapy dog, having completed classes in obedience, as well as being current on their immunizations.

Paws for People

302-351-5622

PAWS for People™ (Pet-Assisted Visitation Volunteer Services, or PAWS) is a nonprofit organization committed to providing therapeutic visits to any person in the community who would benefit from interaction with a well-trained, loving pet. What makes PAWS for People stand above other pet therapy services is the emphasis we place on providing individualized therapeutic experiences for every person we visit. Our strict standards in training and testing dogs and cats make sure every therapy team is capable of meeting the various needs of our diverse clientele. From hospitals and skilled care facilities to chemical dependency centers and elementary schools, thousands of people are experiencing the benefits of one-on-one therapeutic visits thanks to hundreds of dedicated volunteers and their loving therapy companions every year.

Pet Partners

425-679-5500

<https://petpartners.org/about-us/petpartners-story/>

Our Therapy Animal Program represents the best that the field of animal-assisted interventions has to offer. Volunteers in the Therapy Animal Program interact with a wide variety of clients including veterans with PTSD, seniors living with Alzheimer's, students with literacy challenges, patients in recovery, people with intellectual disabilities, and those approaching end of life.

Scatter Joy Acres

402-709-9401

In these challenging times, it takes something special to succeed in a career, and in life. Young people need a strong sense of which they are...what they want to stand for...and what kind of life they want to have. The trouble is this kind of reflection generally falls between the cracks in standard school curricula and traditional character education. We are helping to fill this gap with a program we call BE SOMEBODY! Rather than lecturing kids or telling them what to believe, it takes them on a journey of self-discovery and goal-setting — one that inspires them to reach for the best in themselves. The program is designed to reach students at an age when new inspirations can elevate their sights and alter their life trajectory.

Therapet- Animal Assisted Therapy

903-535-2125

Therapet volunteers and their specially trained pets go to facilities ranging from hospitals to prisons to schools and provide services ranging from assisting stroke patients with their occupational and physical therapy to helping trauma victims share their stories to helping children learn to read.

Additional animal-assisted therapy organizations

<http://www.akc.org/events/title-recognition-program/therapy/organizations/>

Currently there are a variety of Therapy Groups available nationwide. The American Kennel Club (AKC) has compiled a comprehensive list of animal-assisted therapy groups capable of certifying animals for therapy purposes.

Sample School District Policy Regarding Service Animals

This is provided only as an example. No endorsement of this policy is implied.

Individuals with a disability shall be permitted to use a service animal on school premises as and to the extent provided by law.

1. Definition of Service Animal

A service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Other species of animals are not service animals for the purposes of this definition, though miniature horses are in certain circumstances entitled to similar treatment.

The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the handler's disability. Examples of work or tasks that a service dog may perform to meet this definition include:

- Navigation: assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation
- and other tasks,
- Alerting: alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of
- people or sounds,
- Protection: providing non-violent protection or rescue work,
- Pulling: pulling a wheelchair,
- Seizure: assisting an individual during a seizure,
- Allergens: alerting individuals to the presence of allergens,
- Retrieving: retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone,
- Physical support: providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and
- Interrupting behaviors: helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors.

Work or tasks that are excluded from meeting the definition are:

- Guard dogs: the crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and
- Companion dogs: the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship.

2. Permit Presence of Service Animals

An individual with a disability shall be permitted to be accompanied by his or her service animal in all areas where members of the public, participants in services, programs or activities, or invitees, as relevant, are allowed to go. A bona fide trainer of a service animal also has the right to be accompanied by such animal in training. The individual may not be required to pay an extra fee for the service animal to attend events for which a fee is charged.

Service animals may be excluded from school premises if:

- a. The service animal is out of control and the service animal's handler does not take effective action to control it;
- b. The service animal is not housebroken; or
- c. The presence of the service animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. To determine whether a "direct threat" exists, an "individualized assessment" is to be made to ascertain: the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability that the potential injury will actually occur; and whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures or the provision of auxiliary aids or services will mitigate the risk.

3. Control of the Service Animal.

The service animal must be under the control of its handler. In most cases, the dog must have a harness, leash, or other tether. The service animal does not need to be on a leash, however, if the handler is unable because of a disability to use a leash. A leash is also not required if it would interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks. If either of the leash exceptions applies the service animal must be under the handler's control via voice control, signals, or other effective means.

4. Responsibility for Care or Supervision.

The school district is not responsible for the care or supervision of the service animal. The individual with the service animal shall be liable for any damage done to the premises or facilities or to any person by such animal.

5. Inquiries.

When addressing a service animal matter, staff shall not ask about the nature or extent of the person's disability.

Staff may not ask questions about the dog's qualifications as a service animal when it is readily apparent that the dog is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability.

Examples could be when the dog is observed guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision, pulling a person's wheelchair, or providing assistance with stability or balance to an individual with an observable mobility disability.

Where it is not readily apparent that the dog qualifies as a service animal, staff may ask if the dog's presence is required because of a disability and what work or task the dog has been trained to perform. Staff may not require documentation, such as proof that the dog has been certified, trained, or licensed as a service animal.

Legal Reference: Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), 28 CFR §28.104 and §35.136; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504); and state law and regulation.