

SCHOOL / COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Facility / Therapy Dogs Policy

The Helena Public Schools supports the use of therapy dogs by teachers, students or other qualified personnel (“handler/owner”) for the benefit of students and subject to the conditions of policy and administrative procedures.

Therapy Dog

A “therapy dog” is a dog that has been individually trained, evaluated, and certified (e.g. minimum AKC Canine Good Citizen certification or equivalent) to work with its handler/owner to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship to school district students or other groups. A therapy dog must be well behaved, be under the control of its handler/owner, and have a temperament that is suitable for interaction with students and others in a public school.

A handler/owner is an individual school district staff member or volunteer who owns a therapy dog and who has accompanied and participated in the certification process with the therapy dog.

Therapy dogs are **not** “emotional support animals” or “service animals”. A ‘service animal’ is a term used in the Americans with Disabilities Act. An emotional support animal provides comfort to a specific individual.

Therapy dogs are the personal property of the individual owner/handler, teacher, student or employee and are not owned by the school district. The owner/handler shall assume full responsibility for the therapy dog including but not limited to; providing proof of current certification as a therapy dog, proof of up-to-date vaccinations and general good health from a certified veterinary clinic, and proof of liability insurance. The handler/owner is responsible for maintaining the care and behavior of the dog and insuring suitability for interacting with students and others in the school while the therapy dog is on school district property.

Legal References:

Cross References:

Policy History:

Adopted on: 11.14.2017

Revised on: