

## Procedures for Animals in Schools

### Primary Concerns and Need for Animal Use and Care Procedures

- Safety for students and staff
- Proper and humane care for the animals
- Necessary equipment and accommodations
- Clarity of purpose – when animals should be used in the classroom
- Clarity of responsibility for animal care – owner/caretaker (not the children, students, food handlers and custodial staff) is responsible for total animal care

### Classroom/District Animal Use and Care Procedures

The Edmonds School District has adopted school board policy #2030 in regards to animals in schools. The district policy prohibits all animals in school buildings, grounds, and vehicles except service animals, therapy animals, or animals which have been approved by the district and which support a district program or curriculum; animals which are used as part of a district approved curriculum; and fish, frogs and turtles (greater than four inches) kept in clean and maintained aquariums.

### Service Animals

#### A. Service Animal Uses

Service animals are animals that are individually trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities such as guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure or performing other special tasks. Service animals may also be used in cases of persons with traumatic brain injury, intellectual disabilities, or psychiatric disabilities, such as reminding a person with depression to take medication or waking them up, alerting a person with anxiety to the onset of panic attacks, orienting people with schizophrenia to reality, and helping people with intellectual or cognitive disabilities to locate misplaced items, find places or follow daily routines. Service animals must be allowed as part of an ADA accommodation or IEP or 504 plans (for students). All service animals must be on a leash or under the control of the owner at all times. Service animals are working animals, not pets.

Use of a service animal by a student with a disability will be allowed in school when it is determined that the student's disability requires such use in order to assist or accommodate access to the instructional program, school services and/or school activities.

Use of a service animal by an employee with a disability will be allowed when such use is necessary as a reasonable accommodation to enable the employee to perform the essential functions of their job or to access benefits of employment provided to all employees in the same job classification.

The use of a service animal by an individual with a disability will not be conditioned on the payment of a fee, security deposit or surcharge.

## B. Requirements for Service Animal Access

Before a service animal will be permitted in school, on school property or at school sponsored events, the student's parent or the employee must provide a description of the task(s) the service animal is expected to perform in assisting the person with a disability.

The district will provide access to a person with a disability who needs a service animal provided that the tasks performed by the service animal are directly related to the disability; and the animal has been individually trained to perform a task; is housebroken; is free of disease and parasites; has a harness, leash or tether so it cannot run free; and is under the control of the person with a disability.

A service animal must also be licensed and immunized in accordance with the laws, regulations and ordinances of the cities within district, and the state of Washington.

## C. Parents or Animal Handlers

Parents or animal handlers who will be present in school for the purpose of assisting a student with his/her service animal are required to submit to a sex offender registry and criminal background check. In addition, parents and handlers must comply with all standards of conduct that apply to school employees and volunteers.

## D. Removal or Exclusion of a Service Animal from School or School Property

The building principal or district administrator may request an individual with a disability to remove a service animal from school, a school sponsored activity or school property if the animal is out of control and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control the animal. Examples of the animal being out of control include, but are not limited to the following:

1. The presence of the animal poses a direct threat to the health and/or safety of others;
2. The animal significantly disrupts or interferes with the instruction program, school activities or student learning. However, annoyance on the part of the others is not an unreasonable risk to property or others to justify the removal of the service animal;
3. The presence of the animal would result in a fundamental alteration of any school program;
4. The individual in control of the animal fails to appropriately care for the animal, including feeding, exercising, taking outside for performance of excretory functions and cleaning up after the animal;
5. The animal fails to consistently perform the function(s)/service(s) to assist or accommodate the individual with the disability;
6. The animal is ill; or
7. The animal is not housebroken.

If the district excludes a service animal, it will provide the individual with a disability the opportunity to participate in the service, program or activity without having the service animal on the premises.

## E. Service Animals at School-Sponsored Events

Individuals with disabilities may be accompanied by their service animals to events or activities open to the public that are held in schools or on school property.

The building administrator may revoke or exclude the service animals for the reasons set forth in paragraph "D" above.

#### F. Responsibility/Liability

Neither the district, nor its employees, are responsible for the cost, care or supervision of the service animal. A service animal must be under the control of its handler. A service animal must also have a harness, leash or other tether, unless either the handler is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash or other tether, or the use of the harness, leash or other tether would interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the service animal must be otherwise under the handler's control (e.g., voice control, signals or other effective means).

The owner/handler of the service animal is responsible for any and all damage caused by the service animal at school, on school premises or at school activities.

#### G. Appeals

A parent or employee whose service animal has been excluded or removed may appeal the decision to the superintendent. If dissatisfied with the superintendent's decision, the parent or employee may appeal to the board.

#### **Therapy Animals**

Animals used to provide affection and comfort to the owner or assist in calming behavior as a part of a program or psychological services provided by the district or its assigns. These animals do not provide direct assistance and are not mentioned in the Americans with Disabilities Act. To obtain permission for a therapy animal, procedures can be obtained from the District Safety Specialist and a District Checklist for Therapy Animals must be on file. The use of therapy animals in schools must conform to the same requirements listed for Service Animals, above.

#### **Pets**

In the interests of safety and health, family pets of any kind are not allowed in school buildings or in district vehicles. No pets will be allowed on district grounds when school is in session from one half hour before start time until one half hour following dismissal. Pets are not allowed at school sponsored events.

#### **Allergic Reactions**

An allergy is not a valid reason to deny access or refuse service to a person using a service animal. When a person who is allergic to an animal and a student who uses a service animal must spend time in the same room or school, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations in the room or different rooms in the school. The district will work with the parents of both students to develop appropriate accommodations for the service animal and the student with allergies. Depending on the nature of a student's allergy, possible accommodations that might meet the needs of both students may include:

1. Establishing different paths of travel for the two students.
2. Using a portable air purifier by each student's work station.
3. Developing a plan with the two students so they are not using common areas, such as the restroom or library, at the same time.

4. Having the classroom, including carpets, walls, and window treatments cleaned, dusted, and vacuumed regularly.
5. Adding HEPA filters to the existing ventilation systems.

Immunocompromised students may be especially susceptible to zoonotic diseases; therefore, special precautions may be needed to minimize the risk of disease transmission to these students. Consultation with the child's parents about precautionary measures is required. Recommendations for specific precautionary measures may also be solicited from the Washington State Department of Health Zoonotic Disease Program.

### **Instructional Animals, Handling and Care**

Animals approved as part of the school curriculum, fish, frogs and turtles (greater than four inches) must meet the following requirements:

1. Keeping and handling of animals in classrooms and workspaces shall be in a designated area only. Designated areas shall include impervious cleanable surfaces (not on carpet).
2. Hand washing facilities shall be provided and readily accessible. Hands shall always be washed with soap and warm water after handling animals, cages, bedding, cleaners, foods, etc. Hand washing reminder signs are available for aquariums through the safety office (x7032) and must be posted in each classroom near the aquarium.
3. Animals shall be fed appropriate food on a regular basis and be provided with fresh water at all times to prevent animal illness, disease, or death. This is the responsibility of the animals' owners/caretakers and shall not be delegated to students, children, food handlers, or custodial staff.
4. Any cleaning products brought on to the school site to be used to clean cages, aquariums, animal stains, etc. must be accompanied by a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS). Many of the MSDS's are downloadable from the internet. The cleaning products must be kept in a locked cabinet inaccessible to children. The district requires that animal owners/handlers use hypoallergenic or green cleaning products.
5. Fish aquariums shall be cleaned regularly. Used water from aquariums shall be disposed of in sanitary sewer system that is not used for food preparation or for obtaining water for human consumption. Disposable gloves must be worn when cleaning aquariums.
6. Animals should not be allowed in the vicinity of sinks where children wash their hands; in any area where food is prepared, stored, or serviced; or in areas used for the cleaning or storage of food utensils or dishes. Animals must also be restricted from nursing stations or sterile and clean supply rooms.
7. Aquarium tanks should also be located away from heaters, computer equipment, and text books in order to avoid damage to instructional materials or create a fire hazard in the event the tank leaks or becomes damaged.
8. Aquariums for fish, turtles, and frogs should be of a size that can be removed and taken home during school holidays and breaks. These animals are not to be left at the school during extended school breaks.
9. The fish, turtles, and frogs shall be able to withstand the temperature drops in the evenings and weekends as the HVAC system will not be operating during these times as a part of the energy conservation efforts of the district.

### **Handling and Disposal of Animal Wastes**

Children, food handlers and custodial staff shall not be allowed to handle or clean up any form of animal waste (feces, urine, blood, etc.) Except as defined below, the owner/caretaker/handler of the animal shall be the person responsible for disposing of all animal wastes. School district

employees may be designated to dispose of animal wastes for students with service animals. Designation shall be by the appropriate school administrator. Animal wastes must be disposed of where children cannot come in contact with them such as in a plastic bag (tie closed); container with a lid; or via the sewage system for feces and deposited in the dumpsters (not classroom garbage cans). Violation of these requirements may constitute removal of the animals from the facility.

## **References**

Washington State Department of Health and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Health and Safety Guide for K-12 Schools in Washington

Washington State Department of Health Office of Environmental Health & Safety Indoor Air  
Quality Program School Indoor Air Quality Best Management Practices Manual

Washington State Human Rights Commission Service Animal Questions  
711 South Capitol Way, Suite 402  
P.O. box 42490  
Olympia, WA. 98504-2490  
360-753-6770

Office of Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education  
915 Second Avenue, Room 3310  
Seattle, WA. 98174  
206-607-1600

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction,  
Equity and Civil Rights Office, Procedure 2030P  
P.O. box 47200  
Olympia, WA. 98504-7200  
360-725-6162

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