**{{Full\_Charter\_Heading}}**

**INSTRUCTION 2585**

# Use of Therapy Dogs in the School

**NOTE: This is an optional policy. A School is not required to recognize a Therapy Dog.**

The Charter School recognizes that specially trained therapy dogs can provide educational and other benefits for School students and may allow such dogs to be used in schools, in accordance with this policy and with Policy 2580 Use of Dogs in Educational Programs.

A “therapy dog” is a dog that has been individually trained and certified or registered to work with its handler to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship to School students. The dog must have a current American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen certificate or equivalent acceptable to the Executive Director. Therapy dogs are individually trained and certified/registered to provide appropriate interactions with students and others at school. The dog must be well behaved and have a temperament that is suitable for interaction with students and others in a public school.

A “handler” is an adult who is responsible for caring for and supervising the therapy dog, which includes toileting, feeding, grooming, and veterinary care. Students shall not act as handlers.

The School is not obligated to supervise or otherwise care for a therapy dog. Therapy dogs are the personal property of a School employee or volunteer. Therapy dogs are not owned by the School. Therapy dogs are not “service dogs” as described in Policy 2375 Service Animals in Schools. They are also not emotional support dogs intended to provide comfort to a particular individual. This policy is not intended to, and does not, allow students, parents/guardians, staff, or others to bring emotional support dogs onto any School property.

Therapy Dog Plan

School staff who wish to have therapy dogs made available to students shall submit a plan to the Executive Director. It must be resubmitted each year and any time a different therapy dog or handler will be used. The plan shall address all of the following topics:

1. The location for the therapy dog to be kept when the therapy dog is on campus **[OPTIONAL]:, which must meet all of the following conditions:**
2. **Direct access to the outdoors to permit the therapy dog to enter and exit the building without using the building’s interior hallways;**
3. **Free of an intake for the building ventilation system or an independent ventilation system; and**
4. **Non-porous surfaces, including carpet-free floors, for easy hair removal, cleaning, and sanitation**.
5. The credentials of the proposed therapy dog and the organization that has certified them **[OPTIONAL], including:**
6. **Proof the proposed therapy dog has received appropriate certification;**
7. **The credentials of the certification providers;**
8. **A copy of the proposed therapy dog’s temperament evaluation;**
9. **The credentials of the temperament evaluator(s); and**
10. **Proof the proposed therapy dog is current on all vaccinations.**
11. Plans for interaction between the proposed therapy dog and students, including:
12. The students the therapy dog is intended to serve;
13. The anticipated goals for and intended uses of the therapy dog;
14. Proposed instruction to be provided to students on the appropriate behavior and treatment of the therapy dog;
15. How the staff member will accommodate students who are allergic to the dog, fearful of the dog, or whose parents do not give permission for the student to interact with the dog.
16. Plans for care and supervision of the therapy dog, including:
17. The identity and credentials of the handler;
18. The credentials of the providers of the handler’s training;
19. Proposed schedule for the handler to provide necessary care for the therapy dog, including exercise, feeding, watering, toileting, and any necessary cleanup; and
20. Proof of an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on School property.

The Executive Director may reject a proposal for any reason, and shall reject the proposal if:

1. It does not meet the requirements of this policy;
2. The Executive Director does not consider the benefit to outweigh the risks and costs;
3. The Executive Director believes that the time required to care for the therapy dog is inconsistent with the assigned duties of the school employee/handler; or
4. The proposal is otherwise inconsistent with the needs of the school.

Approval of any therapy dog program may be suspended or ended at any time by the Executive Director for reasons including, but not limited to any violation of School policy, the administrator’s determination that the dog’s presence interferes with the educational process, or the administrator’s determination that the handler or dog have behaved in an unprofessional or unsafe manner.

School employees shall not receive any additional pay, stipend, or compensation for providing the therapy dog or for being the handler and/or the owner of the therapy dog. The supervision and care of the approved therapy dog is solely the responsibility of the therapy dog handler when the therapy dog is on School property. The therapy dog handler will assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to School property or injury to School staff, students, or others while the therapy dog is on School property. The therapy dog handler must maintain an insurance policy that provides liability coverage for the therapy dog while on School property.

Appropriate identification as a therapy dog will be kept with the handler at all times when on School property. The therapy dog shall be required to wear a vest, collar, or other article identifying them as a therapy dog and distinguishing them from a service dog. The therapy dog shall be under the control of the handler(s) at all times, and shall be required to be kept on a leash.

The therapy dog shall only be allowed in areas authorized by the Executive Director. If any student or school employee assigned to a classroom in which a therapy dog is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the therapy dog, the handler of the dog will be required to remove the dog to a different location designated by an administrator. Therapy dogs shall not attend field trips.

A student shall not schedule or attend a session with the therapy dog and the student shall not have contact with the dog without a completed Form 2580F Student Permission for Exposure to Dogs on file.

Cross Reference: 2375 Service Animals in Schools

2580 Use of Animals in Educational Programs

2580P School Procedure on Dissection of Animals

Policy History:

Adopted on:

Revised on:

Reviewed on: