

PROFESSIONAL THERAPY DOGS

Professional school therapy dogs certified with their owners/handlers as Certified Assistance Dog Teams provide academic, emotional and physical support in the educational setting. These highly trained dogs model good behavior, tolerance, and acceptance. All Certified Assistance Dog Teams in the Rice Lake Area School District (RLASD) work to support and positively influence student achievement.

Professional Therapy Dogs-definition: Professional therapy dogs are dogs trained and tested to provide specific physical or therapeutic functions under the direction and control of a qualified handler who works with the dog as a team, and as a part of the handler's occupation or profession.

A professional therapy dog has been temperament tested by a trainer affiliated with an organization recognized as qualified to do temperament testing. Such dogs, with their handlers, perform such functions in institutional settings, community-based group settings, or when providing services to specific persons who have disabilities.

Professional therapy dogs in the RLASD are not family pets that have been certified as pet therapy animals.

Professional therapy dogs have passed a Therapy Dogs International (TDI) test or district approved equivalent.

Professional Therapy Dogs may be used in the school setting on a regular basis when the following documentation is in place:

- Administrative Approval
 - The use of the animal or animals must be approved by the building administrator prior to each visit. The building administrator will notify the District Administrator.
 - A letter stating this approval should be written and kept on file in the school building.
- Health Records and Hygiene/Animal Care
 - The owner/handler must provide a record of annual vaccinations received by the dog and signed by a veterinarian; these health records should be kept on file in the school building.
 - Mandatory Rabies (1 or 3 year, by a veterinarian)
 - Distemper
 - Hepatitis
 - Parvovirus
 - Leptospirosis and Parainfluenza (at discretion of your veterinarian)
 - Annual check-up attested to by a veterinarian that the pet is physically and mentally healthy and free of contagious disease

- Fecal check, required even if the dog is on heartworm medication
- Heartworm check and/or listing of preventative medications
- Kennel cough vaccine is strongly encouraged
- It is required that the therapy dog is on a flea/tick control program-dogs should not make a visit within 24 hours of application
- The dog should be groomed and bathed regularly. For dogs in a working environment, monthly to bi-monthly baths are recommended, as is daily brushing (good judgement should be used based on the dog's hair, skin, and dander concerns.) The owner/handler must also ensure proper health care through regular (several times weekly) brushing of the dog's teeth, regular nail trimming as needed, and weekly cleaning/checks of the dog's ears. (Reference: Policy 459, Animals on School Premises; Exhibit 1, Verification of Wellness and Consent for Animal on School Premises; Exhibit 2, Animal on School Premises-Parent Permission Slip)

For the wellbeing of the therapy dog and safety of the students, the following requirements must be met:

- Therapy dogs should have no open sores, diarrhea, cough, sniffles, sneezes and eye conjunctivitis. Visits are restricted for a period of 1 week following any of these conditions. Any surgical incision need to be totally healed.
- Therapy dogs will be kept on a leash at all times during visits. The leash should be clean, nylon or leather and no longer than six feet in length.
- Therapy dogs should not be fed raw foods or treats such as pig's ears as these are extremely high carriers of Salmonella.
- Therapy dogs should be restricted from licking or being fed by staff and students.
- For anyone who is known to have Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA), it is recommended that one's hands be washed before and after touching the therapy dog.
- Therapy dogs will be permanently removed from the program with:
 - any bite
 - any aggressive behavior
- Volunteers must complete therapy dog testing.
- Documentation of Therapy Dogs International membership or district-approved equivalent must be on file in each school building where the dog will be present, prior to making an initial school visit. This can include the dog handler ID card, copy of vaccinations, and therapy dog handkerchief and ID tags on dog.
- The therapy dog and owner are a team.
- Professional School Therapy Dog Guidelines and Procedures
 - Instructing students on proper etiquette around therapy animals
 - Be Safe
 1. Ask for permission before touching the dog
 2. Speak with a calm voice
 - Be Respectful
 1. A dog and its trainer should always be treated with respect.
 2. Using kind words towards trainer and his/her dog

3. Gently pet dog
 4. Only the dog handler controls the leash
 5. Thank the trainer for bringing his/her dog to visit
- Be Responsible
 1. Clean hands before touching therapy dog
 2. After a therapy dog visits, students must wash their hands (review proper handwashing procedures)
 3. When time with the therapy dog is over, leave when asked to leave

The privilege to bring the dog into the school setting may be terminated should the handler or dog behave in a way deemed unprofessional or unsafe.

When a handler uses a professional therapy dog according to the above guidelines, the handler must provide proof of insurance (minimum \$1 million liability coverage.) This is included in membership in Therapy Dogs International (TDI).

A district employee cannot be functioning in a dual role as an employee of the school district and a dog handler at the same time.

Legal Ref:

Cross Ref: 383.1 Service Animals in the Schools

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Reviewed: