



No.
SECTION: Pupils
TITLE: Therapy Dogs on
Campus
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Therapy Dogs on Campus Policy

1 PURPOSE

The Board of Trustees of the Renaissance Academy Charter School supports the use of therapy dogs by teachers or other qualified school personnel and delegates the CEO or their designee to enforce this following policy for the benefit of its students subject to the conditions of this policy.

2 DEFINITIONS

Therapy Dog

A “therapy dog” is a dog that has been individually trained and certified to work with a handler to provide emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship to school students. Therapy dogs are not “service animals” as that term is used in the American with Disabilities Act. A dog must be well behaved and have a temperament that is suitable for interaction with students and others in a public school. Therapy dogs are the personal property of the teacher or employee and are not owned by the school.

Handler

Therapy dog handlers must have completed training and be certified as a handler with an accredited therapy certification agency or be otherwise trained by a certified handler and approved by the Renaissance Academy CEO or the designated program director.

3 STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

The following requirements must be satisfied before a therapy dog will be allowed in school buildings or on the school grounds of the Renaissance Academy:

Training and Certification

All dogs must pass official therapy dog testing and temperament requirements to be officially certified as a therapy dog. Documentation of said training will be provided to the school official charged with monitoring this program.

Health and Vaccination

The therapy dog must be clean, well groomed, in good health, housebroken, and immunized against diseases common to dogs. Documentation of the above will be provided to the school official charged with monitoring this program. Updates should be provided on an annual basis or at the start of each school year.

Control

A therapy dog must be under the control of the handler through the use of a leash or other tether unless the use of a leash or other tether would interfere with the therapy dog's safe, effective performance of its work or tasks. However, the therapy dog must be under the handler's control at all times while on campus

Identification

The therapy dog must have appropriate, visible, identification identifying it as a therapy dog.

Health and Safety

The therapy dog must not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or another person at school. If at any time it is decided that a health or safety risk is present the handler must remove the dog from the premise at their personal expense.

Exclusion or Removal from School

A therapy dog may be excluded from school property and buildings if a school administrator or designee determines that:

- A handler does not have control of the therapy dog;
- The therapy dog is not housebroken;
- The therapy dog presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school; or
- The animal's presence otherwise interferes with the educational process. The handler shall be required to remove the therapy dog from school premises immediately upon such a determination.

Removal will be at the handler's expense and should not interfere with their core duties as an employee of the Renaissance Academy.

Allergic Reactions

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 animal to a different location designated by an administrator.

Authorized Area(s)

The handler shall only allow the therapy dog to be in areas in school buildings or on school property that are authorized by school district administrators. Areas marked 'off-limits' to animals will be consistently enforced for therapy dog access.

4 DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Renaissance Academy, Board of Trustees or others will not be responsible for ownership, health care, or nutritional needs of the therapy dogs. The care of the dogs will be the sole responsibility of their owner; or the certified Handler.

At no time should the handler's primary job at the Renaissance Academy be deserted while managing the therapy dog. If an issue arises which requires the handler to leave their primary teaching or professional responsibilities to tend to the therapy dog they will be required to process the time out of duty as PTO time with proper approval from their administrator.

Professional Therapy Dog Ethics and Safety Standards for Renaissance Academy

1. Handlers should evaluate their dog's health and attitude before each working day. If a dog is injured it should not enter the school site. If a dog has been sick in the last 24 hours it should not enter the school site.
2. Administrators and dog handlers should be aware of the following signs of stress (these are some but not all):
 - Excessive panting
 - The dog jumps or climbs on handler for security
 - Dog hides or cowers behind handler or furniture
 - Shaking, tremors or ears and tail pressed close to the body
 - Yawning and changes in facial expression; tension in the body
 - The dog looks for a doorway or other escape route
 - Snapping and growling
 - Noticeable change in behavior and/or decreased desire to socialize

When these behaviors become noticeable or on-going, the handler and/or administrator should call a trainer to come to the school site and observe the dog. Too much stress in the dog can lead to aggressive behavior. Being proactive can prevent a potentially dangerous situation.

3. The dog should be kept on a short leash (not retractable) when moving through the halls and on the campus. It is permissible for the dog to be off-lead while in a closely supervised situation where it is working. The therapy dog must be accompanied by its dog handler when on site unless in its crate or locked office for rest and respite.
4. When it is necessary for the dog to be left unattended it should be put in an appropriate crate with the door latched, and with adequate water. . This protects the safety of the dog and maintains the dog's activity only when a handler is present.
5. The dog should be clean and well-groomed. Teeth should be clean with no noticeable tartar buildup to model an image of health and well-being.
6. The dog handlers should always clean up after the dog, inside or outside the facility using designated areas only.

7. Give verbal commands firmly and calmly. Praise the dog for exemplary behavior.
8. Be aware of small items dropped on the floor. Do not allow the dog to rummage through trash containers or other items in classroom or office settings. . Use the “leave it” command if this situation arises.
9. Be aware and courteous of the places your dog is welcome or allowed in each facility. Students should be to “smile and wave” (or other quiet greetings) at the dog in the hall or other less-structured environments to alleviate disruption of students’ attention and conduct.
10. When treats are used under the supervision of the handler, students should be taught to give the treat with a flat hand or drop the treat on the ground so that fingers will not accidentally get caught in the dog’s mouth.
11. In the event that a student and/or staff may be allergic to dogs, the site administrator will work with all parties to resolve the concern and create a plan for safe access to the dog.
12. Avoid putting your dog in a questionable or threatening situation.