

SERVICE ANIMALS (STAFF)

Code **ACE-R(1)**

It is the desire of the board to ensure individuals with disabilities can participate in and benefit from all district services, programs, and activities and that the district does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of disability. The district will permit qualified employees with disabilities the opportunity to use service or emotional support animals in the workplace where such use is determined to be a reasonable accommodation through the ADA reasonable accommodation process.

Service Animals

The district does not permit discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including those who require the assistance of a service animal. Therefore, the district will comply with all federal and state laws regarding the use of service animals.

Service animal means a dog¹ individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. The work or tasks performed by a service animal will be directly related to the individual's disability.

The provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship does not constitute work or tasks for the purpose of defining service animal.

Requests from district staff to utilize a service animal must be submitted and handled in the same manner as any other request for accommodation under the ADA. Staff members' requests for use of a service animal will be considered on a case-by-case basis, pursuant to the legal standard applicable to reasonable accommodations for a staff member who is a qualified individual with a disability, in order for the staff member to perform the essential functions of his/her position or to enjoy the benefits of employment in a manner comparable to similarly situated, non-disabled staff members.

District personnel may inquire of the owner or handler of a service animal the following to determine whether an animal qualifies as a service animal in situations where it is not obvious a dog is a service animal: 1) whether the animal is required because of a disability and 2) what specific work or tasks that the animal has been trained to perform.

Where the disability is not obvious and/or the reason the animal is needed is not clear, the district may request documentation to establish the existence of a disability and how the animal helps the individual perform his or her job as part of the ADA accommodations process.

¹ In specific cases, the district may make reasonable modifications of practices or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse on a case-by-case basis if the animal has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.

The district is not responsible for the care and/or supervision of the service animal. A service animal must be under the control of its handler at all times. The district may exclude or ask the individual to remove his/her animal from the premises if the animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it; if the animal is not housebroken; if the presence of the animal poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others; or if the presence of a service animal would require a fundamental alteration to the service, program, or activity of the district.

No staff member may bring a service animal onto district property without the prior written approval of the appropriate administrators.

Emotional Support Animals

The use of an emotional support animal, sometimes referred to as a comfort animal, may be considered if submitted as a request for a reasonable accommodation under the ADA. A request for the use of an emotional support animal must be supported by recent, reliable, objective, medical documentation. Only domesticated animals will be considered as an emotional support animal. Documentation regarding an emotional support animal may be required to address legitimate safety requirements necessary for the safe operation of district services, programs, or activities. All guidelines and procedures found in board policy that apply to service animals will also apply to emotional support animals.

A designated administrator will ensure that all individuals involved in a situation where a service animal and/or emotional support animal will regularly accompany an individual with disabilities are informed of Policy ACE and this accompanying procedure.

Complaint Process

The following person has been designated to handle staff inquiries, questions and grievances regarding the district's service animal policy:

Senior Chief Human Resources Officer
763 Fashion Drive (physical address) Columbia, SC 29229
124 Risdon Way (mailing address) Columbia, SC 29223
(803)787-1910

Adopted ^

Legal References:

A. United States Code of Laws, as amended:

1. Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C.A. Section 12101, *et seq.*