

# SERVICE ANIMALS (STUDENTS)

**ACE-R(2)**

The district acknowledges its responsibility, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Title II regulations, to permit students, staff and school visitors with disabilities to use a service animal in its school buildings, classrooms and at school functions.

## **Definition of Service Animal**

A service animal means any dog 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. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, will not be authorized as a service animal, with the exception of miniature horses in limited instances outlined in law and regulation.

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

## **Request for Use of Service Animals**

1. All requests for students with a disability to be accompanied by a service animal to a district facility on a regular basis must be addressed in writing to Chief Special Education Officer.

The written request must include:

- A statement explaining the service animal is required because of a disability
  - A statement explaining what work or task(s) the service animal has been trained to perform and how the task is directly connected to the person's disability.
    - In situations where it is readily apparent the student has a disability and the animal is trained to do work or perform tasks for the individual as a result of a disability (e.g., dog observed guiding an individual who is blind or has low vision), you may instead choose to provide the name of a district administrator who can attest to those circumstances.
  - Documentation of required vaccinations
  - If appropriate, a statement that the request is made on behalf of a student who has been identified under IDEA (special education) or Section 504.
2. Where feasible, the written request must be delivered to the District Office at least 10 business days prior to the proposed date for bringing the service animal to school or to a school function.
  3. **Special Provisions - Miniature Horses:**

Requests to permit a miniature horse to accompany the student with a disability in school buildings, classrooms or at school functions; will be handled on a case-by-case basis, considering:

- a. The type, size and weight of the miniature horse and whether the facility can accommodate these features.
  - b. Whether the handler has sufficient control of the miniature horse.
  - c. Whether the miniature horse's presence in a specific facility compromises legitimate safety requirements that are necessary for safe operation.
4. The District will provide written notification regarding approval or denial of the service animal.

## **Requirements for Service Animals**

### **1. Vaccinations**

Owners of a service animal must provide documentation, upon submission of the request and annually thereafter, that the animal is current on the following vaccinations: DHLPPC (Distemper, Hepatitis, Leptospirosis, Parainfluenza, Parvovirus and Coronavirus), Bordetella and Rabies. The district may require additional vaccinations as circumstances warrant.

Owners of a miniature horse service animal must have documentation, upon submission of the request and annually thereafter, that the animal is current on the following vaccinations: Equine Infectious Anemia (Coggins Test), Rabies, Tetanus, Encephalomyelitis, Rhinoneumonitis, Influenza and Strangles. The District may require additional vaccinations as circumstances warrant.

Annual documentation of vaccinations should be provided to the Chief Operations Officer at the Richland Two Support Services Center. The district expects the necessary documentation will be timely updated and submitted without reminders or requests from the district.

2. All service animals must be spayed or neutered.

### **3. Cleanliness and Grooming**

All service animals must be treated for, and kept free of fleas, ticks and other pests. All service animals must be kept clean and groomed to avoid shedding and dander.

4. A service animal must have a harness, leash or other tether, unless either the handler is unable because of disability to use a harness, leash or other tether, or the use of a harness, leash or other tether would interfere with the service animals's safe effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the service animal must be otherwise under the handler's control.

## **Additional Obligations of Service Animal User/Owner**

Users/Owners of service animals are liable for any harm or injury caused by the service animal to others, including students, staff and visitors and may be charged for any damage to school property caused by the animal in accordance with District practice.

The district is not responsible for providing or training a handler or for the care or supervision of a service animal, including walking the animal or responding to the animal's need to relieve itself.

- a. The district is not responsible for providing a staff member to feed, exercise or clean up after the service animal or to provide any other care or assistance to the animal.
- b. Students with service animals are expected to care and supervise their animals. In the case of a student who is unable to care for or supervise his/her service animal due to age or disability, a multi-disciplinary team which includes the parent will develop a plan for ensuring the service animal receives appropriate care and supervision.
- c. Issues related to the care and supervision of the service animal (i.e. presence of third-party handlers, designated area for exercise and responsibilities for waste removal) will be addressed on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Principal or his/her designee.

### **Exclusion/Removal of Service Animal**

An administrator can require an individual with a disability or his/her parents to remove or exclude a service animal from school property or function if any of the following circumstances occurs:

- a. The animal is out of control and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control it.
- b. The animal is not housebroken.
- c. The animal's presence would "fundamentally alter" the nature of the service, program or activity.
- d. The animal's presence would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

If the service animal is excluded or removed, the individual will be provided an opportunity to participate in the service, program or activity without having the service animal on the premises.

### **Right to Appeal**

If the service animal is excluded or removed, the individual has the right to file a grievance or an appeal under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The district contact for appeals by students with disabilities is the Chief Special Education Officer.

### **Complaint Process**

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries, questions and grievances regarding the district's service animal policy as it relates to students with disabilities:

Chief Special Education Officer

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