

GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF PROFESSIONAL THERAPY DOGS

The role and Purpose of Certified Assistance Dog Teams in Riceville School:

Professional School Therapy Dogs certified with their owners/handlers as Certified Assistance Dog Teams provide 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 Riceville Community School District work to support and positively influence student achievement.

I. Professional Therapy Dogs - definition

A. 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.

1. A professional therapy dog has been temperament tested by a trainer affiliated with an organization recognized as qualified to do temperament testing.

a) 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.

b) Professional therapy dogs in the RCSD are not family pets that have been certified as pet therapy animals. (See section III, "Pet Visitation").

B. Professional therapy dogs have passed a Public Access Test administered by a trainer/evaluator recognized by Riceville CSD for this purpose. (Currently professional therapy dogs for RCSD are trained through The Good Dog Center of Decorah, IA.)

1. Handlers and their dogs will be administered the Public Access Test for reevaluation during their first year of service and then every two years after.

a) The Public Access re-tests may be administered by a trainer/evaluator recognized by Riceville CSD.

b) A certificate showing that the re-test has been taken should be kept in the handler's building and in the office of the principal.

2. Professional therapy dogs are owned by a professional educator in the Riceville CSD who wishes to use a professional therapy dog to augment his/her educational program.

a) See attached Therapy Dog Handler Ethics

b) See attached documentation requirements (checklist of information) for Certified Assistance Dog Teams in the RCSD.

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

1. Administrative Approval

- a) The use of the animal or animals must be approved by the administrator(s) of the building(s) in which the Professional Therapy Dog's handler works.
- b) A letter stating this approval should be written and kept on file in the building. A copy should be sent to the principal.

2. Health Records and Hygiene/Animal Care

- a) 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 and in the office of the principal.

(1) The dog should receive a bordatella vaccination annually; rabies vaccinations and five-way parvo/distemper (DHPP) shall be updated every three years. Please note: dogs less than one year of age or receiving their rabies and parvo vaccinations for the first time shall receive a follow-up vaccine in one year, with vaccinations every three years thereafter.

(2) The dog should be given a comprehensive wormer or fecal check for worms annually.

(3) The dog should be checked for external parasite control.

(4) All owners will give preventive parasite (fleas and ticks) control and heartworm medication year-round. Annual tests for heartworm are recommended. Please note: Frontline Plus is recommended by the veterinarian on RCSD's professional therapy dog committee – this is due to its non-toxic nature, which is important in a school environment.

(5) 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 judgment 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.

3. Public Access Test Documentation

- a) A copy of the Public Access Test certificate of completion should be kept on file in the school building and in the office of the principal.

(1) A certificate certifying that the handler and the dog both passed the Public Access Test must be sent by the certifying institution to the principal.

(2) Records of advanced obedience, agility, or other training may be kept updated in the employee's file.

D. Review of Professional School Therapy Dog Guidelines and Procedures:

1. Professional Therapy Dog guidelines and procedures will be reviewed annually with all staff and students at the start of the academic year.

2. Review of guidelines and procedures will take place as needed (determined by the administrator and dog owner/handler) throughout the year

II. Oversight Committee

A. A committee of objective persons knowledgeable in the use of therapy dogs is established to help with issues and questions that may arise concerning handlers or dogs.

1. The present members of the committee are:

- a) Guidance Counselor and Professional Therapy Dog Handler
- b) Professional Therapy Dog Owners in the RCSD
- c) Parent Representative
- d) District and/or Building Administrator (on-call)
- e) Local veterinarian (Osage Veterinary Clinic) (on-call)

2. Concerns should be directed to the district administrator who will address the issues with the Oversight Committee.

B. The purpose of the Oversight Committee will be to:

- 1. Provide ongoing training for Professional Therapy Dogs and handlers.
- 2. Provide general assistance with questions and answers pertinent to use of Professional Therapy Dogs.
- 3. Review Professional Therapy Dog policies, procedures, and guidelines.
- 4. Educate and communicate with the school community regarding the use and value of Professional Therapy Dogs.

III. Pet Visitation Dogs – definition

A. A pet visitation dog is a dog owned by a volunteer or student who is NOT employed by Riceville CSD but who has received registration and/or recognition for volunteer pet visitation.

- 1. These dogs are NOT considered to be Professional Therapy Dogs.
- 2. For a dog to be used on a volunteer basis, these guidelines must be followed:

a) If the handler of the dog is an employee of Riceville CSD, the dog and handler MUST be certified under the Professional Therapy Dog guidelines listed above.

b) The dog may be used no more often than one visitation per week for a two-hour interval of time.

(1) Should the dog be used more often or for longer periods, it must pass all requirements for Professional Therapy Dog status before it may be used at school.

B. The following documents must be kept on file in the office of the Director of Finance and the building(s) in which the pet visitation dog is used.

1. Current certification /registration from the therapy dog organization doing the evaluation and testing. Only dogs registered with Therapy Dogs International (DI)P, Therapy Dogs Incorporated (TDInc.) or Delta Society Pet Partners are allowed.

2. Current veterinary records of worming schedules and annual vaccinations for five-way Parvo and bordetella as well as rabies vaccinations every three years.

3. Proof of insurance.

4. A letter of approval from the building administrator(s).

IV. 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.

V. The Riceville CSD will cover costs should the therapy dog be injured due to students or the environment.

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