

5337 SERVICE ANIMALS

The Board of Education may permit the use of a service animal on school grounds by a pupil provided the provisions of this Policy are strictly followed. One who is afforded the opportunity to use a service animal on school grounds must assume the responsibility that the animal behaves and responds appropriately at all times. In addition, the parent or legal guardian of a pupil afforded the opportunity to use a service animal must execute the Parental Release of Liability Agreement Governing the Use of a Service Animal.

A service animal is an animal that has been individually trained to provide assistance to perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a physical or mental disability which substantially limits one or more of their life functions.

- **Guide animal:** An animal that is carefully trained that serves as a travel tool by individuals who are blind or have low vision.
- **Hearing animal:** An animal that has been trained to alert a person with a significant hearing loss or who is deaf when a sound occurs (e.g. a knock on the door, a fire alarm, the phone ringing).
- **Service animal (assistance animal):** An animal that has been trained to assist a person who has a mobility or health impairment. Types of duties the animal may perform include carrying, fetching, opening doors, ringing doorbells, activating elevator buttons, steadying a person while walking, assisting a person to get up after a fall, etc.
- **Sig animal:** An animal trained to assist a person with autism. The animal alerts a person to distracting repetitive movements common among those with autism, allowing the person to stop the movement, such as hand flapping. A person with autism may have deficits in sensory input and may need the same support services from an animal that one might provide for a person who is blind or deaf.
- **Seizure response animal:** An animal trained to assist a person with a seizure disorder. The methods in which the animal serves the person depends on the individual's needs. Some animals have learned to predict a seizure and warn the person in advance.

Documentation requirements

Those seeking use of the service animal by a pupil must show proof that the animal has met the following regulations:

1. Licensing: The animal must meet the licensing requirements of Westfield and wear the tags designated by the town. Records are to be maintained by the Department of Special Services.
2. Health records: The animal must have a health statement, including vaccinations from a licensed veterinarian dated within the past year. Proof of good health must be provided on an annual basis. The animal must be well groomed, and measures should be taken at all times for flea and odor control. Consideration of others must be taken into account when providing maintenance and hygiene of assistance animals. Note that the animal must have current inoculations and evidence of such on an annual basis. Records are to be maintained by the Department of Special Services.
3. Control Requirements:
 - a. The animal must be on a leash at all times. It should never be permitted to wander around off leash except if the animal is working and requires being off a leash to perform its duties;
 - b. The animal must be fully controlled by the pupil at all times;
 - c. The animal must be as unobtrusive as possible.
4. Exclusion for behavior: A service animal may be excluded from school grounds when that animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others. Should the animal be excluded due to being out of control, the school district will give the individual who uses the service animal the option of continuing to attend the school without having the service animal on the premises.
5. Consequences for behavior: When an assistance animal is determined to be out of control, the infraction will be treated on an individual basis. If the animal poses a threat to the safety of others, consequences may include, but are not limited to, muzzling a barking animal, refresher training for the animal and the pupil, or exclusion from school facilities. The costs for refresher training and all costs associated with the animal in the building will be the responsibility of the pupil's parents.

Public Etiquette by the Animal:

The animal:

1. Must not be allowed to sniff people, storage areas, tables in eating areas, or personal belongings of others.
2. Must not initiate contact with someone without the pupil's direct permission.
3. Must not display any behaviors or noises that are disruptive to others, such as barking, whining, or growling.
4. Must avoid excessive personal grooming in public settings.
5. Must not block an aisle or passageway.
6. Must be trained not to be attracted to food that may be in common areas.

Public Etiquette by Pupils/Staff/Faculty/Administration on School Grounds:

Individuals must not:

1. Pet a service animal while it is working. Service animals are trained to be protective of their pupil and petting distracts them from their responsibilities.
2. Feed a working service animal.
3. Deliberately startle, tease or taunt a service animal.
4. Separate or attempt to separate a service animal from a pupil.
5. Hesitate to ask a pupil if he/she would like assistance if the pupil and animal seem confused about a direction to turn, an accessible entrance, the location of an elevator, etc.

Relief Areas:

Relief areas will be designated on an individual basis with the collaboration of the Department of Special Services and the school grounds personnel. The areas will be included in mobility training and orientation of pupils and animals that are new to the school. It is the pupil's responsibility to be aware of the animal's need to relieve itself and act accordingly.

Areas of Safety:

There are certain instances when it may be considered unsafe for animals in such places as medical facilities, laboratories, mechanical rooms or any other place where the safety of the animal or its pupil may be threatened. All areas of the school district will be considered as to its safety potential. When it is determined unsafe for the team to be in one of these areas, reasonable accommodations will be provided to assure the pupil equal access to the activity.

Emergency Situations:

In the event of an emergency, a Crisis Intervention Team (Emergency Response Team), located in the building where the animal is located, will be assigned to respond. The Team shall be trained to recognize service animals and to be aware that the animal may be trying to communicate the need for assistance. The Team should make every effort to keep the animal with the pupil.

Conflicting Disabilities:

It is common for persons to have a disability that precipitates an allergic reaction to animals. Persons who have asthma/allergy/medical issue with the animal are to be directed to make the complaint to the Department of Special Services. The person making the complaint must provide verifiable medical documentation to support his/her claim. Action will be taken to consider the needs of both persons to resolve the problem as efficiently and effectively as possible.

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