

Animals in District Facilities

Animals are generally prohibited on district property. Only service animals¹ as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and animals approved by the superintendent or designee that are part of an approved district curriculum or co-curricular activity are allowed in district facilities and grounds. It is the policy of the High Desert Education Service District to support the inclusion of service animals as part of its compliance with Federal and State laws as well as its belief that our school community values those with different needs and seeks to support them to be fully included in a manner that fosters greater independence.

The High Desert Education Service District recognizes that the presence of animals at school can provide a valuable learning experience, but animals shall not be allowed to endanger student safety or disrupt learning. There should be a clear instructional purpose for allowing an animal in a school classroom. Prior to any animal being brought to a school or district facility, special consideration must be given to the effect of furred and feathered animals for any health risk including allergic reaction of staff or students.

The following guidelines apply to animals used as a teaching or behavioral aid in High Desert Educational Service District facilities:

1. Permission must be obtained by the director of the program and/or facility before animals are brought into the facility. Dogs brought into a facility for a therapeutic purpose must be trained, certified and registered as a therapy dog by a reputable national organization, as determined by the district. Owners must show evidence of such certification/registration when seeking permission from the district to bring a therapy dog into a district facility.
2. Parents must be notified in writing prior to bringing animals into a district facility so they can inform the district of any medical conditions/allergies.
3. The owner will be liable and responsible for the proper control of the animals brought into the school for instructional purposes, including the effective protection of students when animals are in the facility.

¹ The Americans with Disabilities Act definition of "service animal" means any dog that is 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. Companion and comfort animals are not considered service animals. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. The crime deterrent effects of an animal's presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition. The law and its regulations also make an allowance for miniature horses.

4. Animals are generally to be on a leash or an appropriate cage or carried when in district facilities and on school grounds.
5. Vaccinations must be documented for appropriate animals.
6. Staff members or students who have been bitten or otherwise injured by an animal shall immediately report such incident to the director of the program and/or facility. An animal that bites or demonstrates any aggressive behavior must be removed from the premises and cannot be returned to any classroom in the future.
7. Animal owners will be legally responsible for damage done to persons and property. Owners must carry appropriate insurance to cover any injuries sustained by persons or property when the animal is present in a district facility.
8. If animals are to be kept in the classroom on days when classes are not in session, the teacher must make arrangements for their care.
9. Wild, poisonous, or exotic animals are prohibited unless they are under the direct supervision of a trained representative and have the building administrator's authorization.
10. This policy applies only to animals in facilities controlled by the High Desert Education Service District. Staff members or volunteers who wish to bring an animal into a facility owned by another school district must follow that school district's policy regarding animals in their facilities.
11. Animal owners must sign an acknowledgment that they have been given a copy of this administrative regulation and agree to abide by its terms prior to bringing an animal into district facilities. Failure to abide by the requirements contained herein will be grounds for the district to remove the animal from district facilities.