



Policy on Service Animals

Tim Wyrosdick
Superintendent of Santa Rosa County School District

The Policy on Service Animals was developed by the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Department with contributions from the following individuals:

Bill Emerson
Assistant Superintendent

Debbie Anderson
Director of ESE

Sherry Smith
Director of Student Services

Deborah Ray
Deputy Director of ESE

April Martin
Director of Elementary Education

Tiffanie Coleman
Coordinator of ESE

Floyd Smith
Director of Middle School Education

Elizabeth Toms
ESE Program Facilitator

Jason Weeks
Director of Secondary Education

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Santa Rosa County School's policy/procedures on service animals on schools campuses in compliance with American Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II Regulations, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Santa Rosa County does not discriminate on the basis of a disability and makes reasonable accommodations for a person with a disability to use a service animal on school property. Service animals are personal property and cannot enter the school campus without prior written approval.

Definition

A service animal, as defined by Section 413.08, Florida Statutes (F.S.), is “an animal that is trained to perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The tasks may include, but are not limited to, guiding a person who is visually impaired or blind, alerting a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, pulling a wheelchair, assisting with mobility or balance, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, retrieving objects, or performing other special tasks. A service animal is not a pet.”

The 2010 ADA Section 35.104 of Title 28, Code of Federal Regulations (28 CFR 35.104), implementing the ADA, defines a service animal as “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”. In addition, the 2010 ADA Title II Regulations state “other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition”. The 2010 ADA Title II Regulations have made exceptions to this rule, but they have been on a case-by-case basis.

The 2010 ADA Title II Regulations state that the service animal must be trained to perform a work or task directly related to the area of disability. An “emotional support” or “therapy animal” does not qualify as an animal under the regulations, and therefore is not permitted to accompany a student with a disability on the school campus.

Service Animal Standards and Behavior

Service animals should be in the control of the handler or substitute, housebroken, should not interfere with the educational process or cause/pose a threat or cause harm to any student, personnel, or other persons. Specifically, the animal should be clean and well groomed, does not solicit attention or disrupts the normal day to day operations, does not show aggression towards others, works quietly on a harness or leash, is able to urinate and defecate on command, is able to perform tasks in public, and is within 24” of it’s handler. Santa Rosa County holds the right to exclude service animals should they not meet these parameters.

Section 413.08 of the Florida Statute recognizes that the parent and or guardian are responsible for any damage to a person or property caused by the service animal. It is recommended that parent and or guardian have \$100,000 of liability insurance to cover any damage caused by the service animal. The parent and or guardian must sign a liability statement before the service animal is permitted on campus. If a student arrives at school with a service animal, without prior approval, the parent and or guardian will be notified immediately to come to the school and remove the animal within a reasonable timeframe. The animal will not be permitted to return to the schools campus until it is determined compliance is rendered.

Required Documentation

In cases where a parent and or guardian requests that a service animal be present on the school campus, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team or Section 504 team must meet to determine if the service animal is required to ensure the student receives a free and

appropriate public education (FAPE). In addition, the parent and or guardian must provide documentation from a licensed veterinarian annually before being granted access on Santa Rosa County School's campus.

Procedures

1. The parent and or guardian submits a request in writing to the school's principal for the service animal to accompany the student while on the school campus.
2. The parent and or guardian will provide documentation from the licensed veterinarian. If it's not an initial request, this required documentation is required annually for the animal to stay on the school's campus.
3. The parent and or guardian will sign the liability release.
4. The parent and or guardian will submit documentation for the handler's background screening and fingerprints should the student not be able to independently guide the service animal.
5. The principal will submit documentation to the ESE Department.
6. The ESE Department will review the submitted documentation in a timely manner.
7. The ESE Department will communicate with the parent regarding service animal documentation discrepancies prior to the IEP/504 meeting.
8. The school liaison or counselor will notify the parents of an IEP/504 team meeting.
9. The IEP/504 meeting will determine if an accommodation is necessary for the student.

The parent and or guardian will be responsible for ensuring the service animal comes to school with the appropriate harness and or leash unless it interferes with the safety or ability of the service animal to perform necessary tasks. The parent and or guardian will be responsible for providing materials needed for care of the service animal such as snacks, plastic bags for waste disposal, and water bowl.

In the event, a service animal approval is not granted, an appeal can be submitted in writing to the ESE Director.

Transportation

Upon approval, the parent and or guardian will provide information to the transportation department, bus driver, and assistant regarding commands, daily interaction, and emergency/evacuation procedures. The parent and or guardian should provide orientation of the service animal with the bus driver and the assistant before transportation begins. The service animal will board the bus by the steps and will not be permitted to board the bus via the bus lift. The service animal will be seated at the bottom of the handler's feet.

Possible situations that would cause cessation of transportation may be, but are not limited to: service animal poses a threat to the safety of others, urinating or defecating on the bus, the service animal does not stay in the designated area.

Implementation

Upon approval, the school will work with the owner/handler to familiarize the service animal with the school campus prior to arrival, orient the service animal to faculty and students, establish an educational program to help educate students on proper behavior, establish a place for the service animal to defecate and urinate, and establish a resting place.

Santa Rosa County Schools recognizes that some students and faculty may be highly allergic to certain animals. Upon approval of a service animal and prior to the service animal coming to school, the principal will notify faculty and parents of the impending arrival of the service animal and request information pertaining to possible allergic reactions. This will allow the administrators to make appropriate plans for the safety and well being of the school.

The service animal is personal property of the student. Santa Rosa County Schools does not assume responsibility of training, daily care, or healthcare of service animals.

For questions please contact the Exceptional Student Education Department at (850) 983 5150.