

## **WOONSOCKET EDUCATION DEPARTMENT POLICY ON ANIMALS IN SCHOOL**

The Woonsocket Education Department (“Department”) recognizes that, under the proper conditions, animals can be effective teaching aids. The Department also complies with state and federal laws regarding the use of service dogs by individuals with disabilities. At the same time, the Department recognizes that there may be medical and physical risks associated with the presence of animals in school buildings or on school grounds. To ensure the health and safety of all students, staff, and visitors, the Department does not permit animals in its school buildings or on school grounds except as required by law or expressly authorized under this policy.

The Superintendent or designee shall oversee compliance with this policy and develop protocols for its implementation. Any building principal or other administrator (*e.g.*, Director of Special Education and Student Services or Director of Human Resources and Labor Relations) authorizing the presence of an animal in school buildings or on school grounds shall submit documentation of compliance with this policy and related protocols to the Superintendent or designee’s office before the animal is scheduled to arrive. Failure to supply documentation of compliance may result in discipline up to and including termination from employment.

### Animals for Educational Purposes

Requests to use an animal for educational purposes must be directed to the building principal in writing. The building principal and/or assistant principal may authorize the presence of animals in their school buildings for educational purposes, provided that the presence of the animal does not compromise the health or safety of students and staff. Prior to granting any request, the building principal or designee shall ensure, in consultation with the school nursing staff, that the presence of the animal will not compromise the health or safety of any student. The building principal or assistant principal shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with all protocols to be developed by the office of the Superintendent or designee.

The individual having custody or control of the animal shall be solely responsible for any injuries sustained to the animal or to people, and for any damages to Department property, due to the presence of the animal.

Building principals may authorize the presence of law enforcement K-9 units on school grounds or in school buildings for educational, non-law enforcement purposes only, provided the presence of such units is otherwise consistent with this policy.

### Service Dogs

The Department permits the use of service dogs in school buildings and on school grounds in accordance with applicable state and federal law. For purposes of this policy, a “service dog” includes any dog that has been individually trained to do work or to perform a task for the benefit of an individual with a disability.

Student requests to bring a service dog on school premises must be directed to the Director of Special Education and Student Services. Employee requests must be directed to the Director of

Human Resources and Labor Relations. All requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Documentation of compliance with this policy and related protocols shall be submitted to the office of the Superintendent or designee.

### Therapy/Emotional Support Animals

The Department is authorized to develop and implement a therapy dog program consistent with protocols to be developed by the Superintendent or designee. The Department does not otherwise permit therapy animals or emotional support animals, as distinguished from service dogs, inside school buildings or on school grounds.

### Student Health and Safety

No animals may be brought into the school building or kept in the school, classroom, office, or common areas that may negatively impact the health of any student who must utilize that area. The following health and safety requirements apply to all animals in school buildings or on school grounds, including service dogs:

1. The animal must be under the control of its handler at all times. If, in the opinion of the building principal or designee, an animal is not in the control of its handler, or if it is not housebroken, the animal may be excluded from the premises. The animal may also be excluded if it presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school.
2. The animal must be in good health and up-to-date with all vaccinations, including rabies if applicable.
3. Animals that cause an allergic reaction or impair the health of students shall immediately be moved to a different location designated by the principal or designee.
4. In the event of a conflict between the need of a student or employee to bring a service dog to school and the health/medical needs of another student or employee (e.g., someone with a severe allergy to dogs), the Department will collect necessary information from the individuals involved to create a plan that addresses the needs of both individuals.

Sources:

Animals in School and Daycares, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[[cdc.gov/healthypets/specific-groups/schools.html](http://cdc.gov/healthypets/specific-groups/schools.html)]

*1<sup>st</sup> Passage approved by WSC: 10-13-21*  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Passage approved by WSC: 10-27-21*