

MEDWAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Medway, MA

Medway School Committee Policy

Policy #85

ANIMALS IN SCHOOL

Medway Public Schools is committed to providing a high quality educational program to all students in a safe and healthy environment.

No animal shall be brought to school without prior permission from the building principal and notice to the superintendent, with the exception of service animals.

School principals, in consultation with the school nurse coordinator, shall review the Department of Public Health publication, "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and student health records to determine whether and which animals may be allowed in the school building. The decision of the building principal shall be final.

Educational Program

Use of animals to achieve specific curriculum objectives may be allowed, provided that prior permission is granted by the building principal. Any animal brought to school must not jeopardize student health and safety, and the individual requesting that the animal be brought to school must be responsible for adhering to the "Guidelines for Animals in Schools or on School Grounds" and any other conditions established by the building principal to protect the health and well-being of students. Any domestic animal entering a school building must have proof of an up-to-date rabies vaccine.

Student Health

The health and well-being of students is the district's highest priority. Animals may cause an allergic reaction or otherwise impair the health of students. No animals may be brought to school or kept in the school, classroom, office or common area that may negatively impact the health of any student who must use that area. Animals that cause an allergic reaction or impair the health of students shall be removed from the school immediately so that no student shall have his/her health impaired and so that each student shall have full access to available educational opportunities.

Animals Prohibited from School

Rabies is a growing problem to which all fur-bearing animals are susceptible. Infected animals can transmit this disease to students and staff. Based upon the Massachusetts Department of Health and Department of Education recommendations, the animals listed below in parts A through E are prohibited from the Medway Public Schools, including from school premises, grounds and transportation.

A. Wild Animals and Domestic Stray Animals

Because of the high incidence of rabies in bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes and other wild carnivores, these animals should not be permitted in school buildings under any circumstance, including dead animals.

B. Fur-Bearing Animals (pet dogs,* cats, wolf-hybrids, ferrets, etc.)

These animals may pose a risk for transmitting rabies, as well as parasites, fleas, other diseases and injuries.

* Exception: Guide, Hearing and Other Service Dogs, Law Enforcement Dogs, or Miniature Horses – These animals may be allowed in school or on school grounds with proof of current rabies vaccination and in accordance with the Service Animal Policy set forth below.

C. Bats

Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies. Bat houses should not be installed on school grounds and bats should not be brought into the school building.

D. Poisonous Animals

Spiders, venomous insects and poisonous snakes, reptiles and lizards are prohibited for safety reasons.

E. Ducks, Chicks and Birds

Because of the high risk of salmonellosis and campylobacteriosis from baby chicks and ducks, these animals are prohibited from schools. Transmission of these diseases from chicks and ducklings to children is well-documented. In addition, psittacosis, a bacterial disease that can cause fever, chills, rash, and pneumonia, is transmitted through inhaling dust from the contaminated

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droppings of infected birds. Because psittacine birds (parrots, parakeets, budgies, and cockatiels) can carry psittacosis, these birds should not be handled by children and should not be brought into school.

Exceptions may be made with the prior approval of the building principal and superintendent.

Service Animals

The school committee does not permit discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including those who require assistance of a service animal. The district will comply with Massachusetts law concerning the rights of persons with guide or assistance animals and with federal law and will permit such animals on school premises and on school transportation.

For purposes of this policy, a “service animal includes any animal that has been individually trained to do the work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability,” and as recognized by law.

A service animal is not a pet. Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that individuals with disabilities cannot perform themselves. A service animal is trained to aid a person with “a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability” which restricts the person’s ability to engage in one or more major life activities. Emotional support animals, comfort animals, or companion animals whose presence alone has a positive effect on an individual with a disability are not service animals. Therapy animals, who provide therapeutic interaction to individuals with physical, emotional, cognitive or other types of impairments are also not service animals. Such animals are, therefore, not permitted on school premises and on school transportation without the prior approval of the building principal.

To be qualified as a service animal, the animal must perform some function or task that an individual with disability cannot perform, be under control of its handler and be housetrained. There are several kinds of service animals that assist individuals with disabilities. Examples include, but are not limited to, animals that:

- assist individuals who are blind or have severe sight impairments as “seeing eye dogs”, “guide dogs”, “seeing eye horses”, or “guide horses”;
- Alert individuals with hearing impairments to sounds;
- Alert to oncoming seizures or asthma attacks;
- Assist with balance or standing;

- pull wheelchairs or carry and pick up items for individuals with mobility impairments

The regulations dictate that “a public entity shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices or procedures to permit the use of a miniature horse by an individual with a disability if the horse has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of the individual with the disability.” Miniature horses that have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities shall be allowed on school premises where reasonable. When determining whether miniature horses can be accommodated in a school building, the principal shall consider the following factors: (1) whether the miniature horse is housebroken; (2) whether the miniature horse is under the owner’s control; (3) whether the facility can accommodate the miniature horse’s type, size, and weight; and (4) whether the miniature horse’s presence will not compromise legitimate safety requirements necessary for safe operation of the facility.

The district shall not assume or take custody or control of, or responsibility for, any service animal or the care or feeding thereof. Any service animal must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered unless these devices interfere with its work or are not possible due to the disability, in which case the owner must keep control with voice, signal, or other effective means. The owner or person having custody and control of the animal shall be liable for any damage to persons, premises, property, or facilities caused by the service animal, including, but not limited to, clean, up, stain removal, etc.

If, in the opinion of the building principal, or his/her authorized designee, any service animal is not in the control of its handler, or if it is not housebroken, the service animal may be excluded from the school or program. The service animal can also be excluded if it presents a direct and immediate threat to others in the school. The parent/guardian of the student having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the service animal from the premises immediately.

Student or Staff allergies shall not be valid reasons for excluding a service animal from school premises, but the building principal shall ensure that both the person suffering from an allergy and the student using a service animal are accommodated. If any student or staff member assigned to the classroom in which a service animal is permitted suffers an allergic reaction to the

animal, the person having custody and control of the animal will be required to remove the animal to a different location designated by the building principal, or his/her designee, and an alternative plan will be developed with appropriate district staff. This will also apply if an individual on school transportation suffers an allergic reaction. In this case, an alternative plan will be developed in coordination with appropriate school, district, and transportation staff including the involvement of the parent/guardian of the student.

The Medway Public Schools shall not be responsible for the care and/or supervision of any service animal. The District shall not be responsible for providing a staff member to walk the service animal, to respond to the animal's need to relieve itself, or to provide any other care or assistance to the animal. Students with service animals are expected to care for and supervise their animal or to provide a handler who will perform these functions. Issues related to the care and supervision of service animals shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis in the discretion of the building administrator.

The superintendent, or his/her designee, shall be responsible for developing procedures to accommodate a student's use of a service animal in the district facilities and on school transportation vehicles.

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