

## ANIMALS IN THE SCHOOLS - REGULATION

The RSU 19 School Board recognizes that the presence of animals at school can provide a valuable learning experience but animals cannot be allowed to endanger student safety or disrupt learning. There should be a clear instructional or therapeutic purpose for keeping an animal in a school classroom. In addition, the RSU 19 School Board recognizes that instruction related to the care and treatment of animals teaches students a sense of responsibility and promotes the humane treatment of living creatures. It is the policy of the RSU to notify parents of students in a classroom when an animal is being introduced. It is our policy to support the inclusion of service animals as part of its compliance with federal and state law 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.

### Procedures

#### ➤ **Animals Brought to School for Short Term/Day Visits:**

During school hours, no animal will be brought to school without prior authorization. Students must obtain permission from their teacher; staff will obtain authorization from the principal. Parental notification shall be made prior to a classroom visit. Arrangements for animal visits should be made 24 hours in advance. Animals brought to school at pick up and drop off times will be leashed.

Proof (from a veterinarian) of compliance with immunizations for any disease that can be transmitted to humans shall be filed with the Superintendent's office in advance. All mammals will be properly vaccinated. Rabies vaccination is required for any mammal.

Any animal brought to school must remain under control of the responsible adult at all times. The animal will be contained on a leash or in a suitable carrier. This applies to days when school is in session, prior to the start of school, and for an hour after school is dismissed. Transportation to and from school will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian or other adult. Animals are not to be transported on school buses.

No wild animals or protected animals will be purposely brought to the building or on school grounds by anyone other than an authorized or licensed animal handler. There will be no physical contact between the animal and students unless it is an integral part of the objectives for the program with prior approval received from the principal.

#### ➤ **Accidental Injury:**

Should any student or adult be bitten by an animal at school, a health care provider and the local health officer shall be immediately notified. In addition, in the case of a child, parents will be called. A copy of the incident report (signed by the principal) will be sent to the involved family with personally identifiable information involving other children redacted as needed.

➤ **Service Animals:**

The use of service animals is not subject to the restrictions of these regulations. Restricting the presence of service animals on school grounds is subject only to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act, its regulations, and corresponding provisions of state law. The ADA defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. It is not necessary for a service dog to be licensed or certified by a state or local governmental agency as a service dog to be considered one by the ADA.

Service dogs are not pets and are permitted to accompany the individual with a disability to all areas of the facility where children normally go.

The RSU reserves the right to restrict a service animal from its premises when it is determined that the dog's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. When a service animal is introduced to the classroom, a team, including the teacher, administrator, and family, will be formed to develop a comprehensive written plan. This plan will include a detailed description of implementation strategies as well as a communication plan. Determination of threat is the responsibility of the principal. Determination of threat will be made in consultation with the school's child protection team (including the school nurse, counselor, and principal).

➤ **Students with Medical Concerns:**

Student health issues will be considered when assessing the appropriateness of animals in the classroom. Parent notification will be made prior to the visit to assure that there is no conflict.

Conflicts or concerns with animals and children with medical reactions to those animals will be referred to the school nurse. It is the policy of the RSU to consider the safety, health, and well being of each and every student when making decisions regarding the introduction of animals to the classroom. When there is a conflict in this area, the principal is responsible for resolving the matter in consultation with the involved parties, the school nurse and the Superintendent.

➤ **Law Enforcement:**

Animals under the control of a law enforcement officer are excluded from the provisions of these regulations.

➤ **Liability:**

The owner or handler of any animal, including a service animal, is responsible for the animal's behavior and shall be liable for all damages suffered by persons who may be bitten or injured, and all damages to public or private property, regardless of the former viciousness of the animal or the owner's knowledge of such viciousness.

➤ **Humane Treatment of Animals:**

Animals within the school will be handled, treated, and housed in a humane manner. Enclosures will be appropriate to the species. Animals will be kept in an environment appropriate to the species. Habitats will be maintained and cleaned regularly by staff – not students.

References:

Americans with Disabilities Act, 28 CFR Section 38.302

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504

Leash law

Title 7, Part 9, Chapter 719

Maine Public Accommodation 4553 (9-D); 4582-A(3); 4592(8)