

Therapy Animals in the Workplace



2/28/2023

POLICY SCOPE:

The Town of Stow, in conjunction with the Board of Health, is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all, including residents, visitors, consultants, contractors, employees, and volunteers in municipal buildings. In keeping with this commitment, the Town does not permit employees to bring household pets to work. The purpose of this policy is to create guidance on Therapy Animals in our municipal buildings.

APPLICABILITY:

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of the Town of Stow and visitors to any town owned buildings. This policy recognizes therapy animals who may be part of a program to benefit attendees. Employees governed by a collective bargaining agreement are subject only to those provisions of this policy not specifically regulated by law or agreement.

DEFINITION:

Therapy Animal is an animal who, with their handler, is trained and certified to provide psychological or physiological therapy to individuals other than their handler. They work as a team with their owners to volunteer in settings such as daycare centers, schools, hospitals, libraries, and senior facilities. Unlike service dogs, therapy animals are encouraged to interact with people while they are on duty and are not allowed in restaurants, cafeterias, and may be limited to certain areas of a building.

POLICY DESCRIPTION:

A certified therapy animal may be allowed in municipal buildings with its handler, provided that the animal's presence does not create a danger to others and does not impose an undue hardship upon the Town. The therapy animal must comply with all federal, state, and local laws, including vaccinations and be licensed in its home town. Their handler must be in possession of proof of registration for presenting upon request prior to entering any town building.

PROCEDURE:

Therapy Animals:

1. All therapy animals must be registered and approved by the HR department.
2. The therapy animal must be:
 - a. Trained to not disrupt any program or activity
 - b. Odor free, free of fleas and ticks
 - c. Friendly, not bark, hiss, growl, bite, or threaten anyone

- d. Housebroken and not urinate or defecate in a building.
3. Proof of training, including a copy training certification is required. Therapy dogs must be trained, the training required is Canine Good Citizen and Companion Obedience Foundation Skills Course, and an American Kennel Club evaluation, however, other trainings may be approved by the HR department.
4. All therapy animals must be licensed in compliance with local laws, and must also be vaccinated against rabies and other diseases typically found in that animal and must wear a tag displaying its rabies vaccinated status as well as it's license.
5. The handler must provide current documentation that the animal is licensed, current with vaccinations, free of parasites and have a clean bill of health from a veterinarian.
6. When the therapy animal is on the premises, a notice will be posted saying that a certified animal is on the premises/in the building.
7. Therapy animals are not allowed in food preparation areas or other areas that may be unsafe for the animal or the handler.
8. The therapy animal should have a calm, gentle, friendly, and happy demeanor.
9. The owner of the animal is completely and solely liable for any injuries or any damage to personal property caused by the animal. The Town of Stow will require the owner of the animal to maintain a liability insurance policy, usually a homeowner's pet policy, covering damage or injuries caused by the animal while in a municipal building.
10. The Town of Stow shall not be liable for loss of, or injury to the therapy animal brought into municipal buildings.
11. The owner of the animal must be prepared to provide to the HR Department a current copy of a health certificate from a licensed veterinarian stating that the animal is properly vaccinated and is free of internal and external parasites, a current rabies vaccination certificate (for animals for which rabies vaccination is required by law), along with proof of licensing in the town in which the animal resides at least annually.