



BELLOWS FREE ACADEMY/NWTC  
FAIRFIELD CENTER SCHOOL  
ST. ALBANS CITY SCHOOL  
ST. ALBANS TOWN EDUCATIONAL CENTER

## Procedure



### PROCEDURE: SUPPORT ANIMALS

CODE: C52P

These procedures outline acceptable practices for emotional support or comfort animals, service or guide animals, and therapy animals to be utilized by students and staff.

### DEFINITIONS

**Emotional Support or Comfort Animal:** An emotional support animal (ESA) is an animal that helps alleviate symptoms of an emotional or mental disability through companionship and affection. An ESA can only be prescribed to a patient by a licensed mental health professional. Schools in MRUSD do not allow an ESA on school grounds. An ESA is not a guide/service animal or therapy animal.

**Therapy Animal:** A therapy animal is there to be petted and provide comfort and affection to individuals at various places that request its visits. A therapy animal and his/her handler visit facilities such as hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes, and schools. A therapy animal is available upon request to visit and provide support and comfort to many individuals, whereas a service dog or guide animal is there to provide support and perform tasks for one individual with a disability. School administrators have discretion to approve or not approve therapy animals.

**Service or Guide Animal:** An animal prescribed by a medical expert to assist an individual person with a disability to avoid hazards or to otherwise compensate for a disability. A service/guide animal is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a disabled person. A service animal may enter private establishments like a grocery store or restaurant (as allowed by the American with Disability Act (ADA)) while an ESA cannot. **Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices.** In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.

### PROCEDURES

For service or guide animals, both the animal and the person with a disability must be trained and certified. A person with a guide animal has the same rights and privileges and obligations as a person not accompanied by an animal. School staff are only allowed to ask two questions regarding service/guide animals. They may ask if the animal is a service animal that is required due to a disability and what type of work or task the animal has been trained to do. The ADA prohibits them from asking questions about a person's disability.

Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access or refusing service to people using service animals. When a person who is allergic to dog dander and a person who uses a service animal must spend time in the same room or facility, for example, in a school classroom or at a homeless shelter, they both should be accommodated by assigning them, if possible, to different locations within the room or different rooms in the facility.

40 A person with a disability cannot be asked to remove his service animal from the premises unless: (1)  
41 the dog is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it or (2) the dog is not  
42 housebroken. When there is a legitimate reason to ask that a service animal be removed, staff must  
43 offer the person with the disability the opportunity to obtain goods or services without the animal's  
44 presence.

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46 Emotional support animals, comfort animals, and therapy animals are not service animals under Title II  
47 and Title III of the ADA. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are  
48 not considered service animals. A doctor's letter does not replace training and certification  
49 requirements for a service animal.