

SERVICE ANIMAL POLICY

The Springfield Public Schools acknowledges its responsibility to permit students and/or adults with disabilities to be accompanied by a service animal in its school buildings, in classrooms, and at school functions, as required by the Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") and its implementing regulations found at 28 CFR Part 35, subject to the following:

1. All requests for an individual with a disability to be accompanied by a service animal must be addressed in writing to the Superintendent of Schools/Special Education Director.
2. Only a dog or a miniature horse may qualify as a service animal pursuant to Title II of the ADA. No other species of animal, whether wild or domestic, will be permitted in schools as a service animal.
3. For students on an IEP or 504 plan, if a request is made to allow the student to have a service animal at school or at a school-sponsored function, the IEP or 504 Team will consider the request, and whether it can provide services and/or accommodations that would serve the stated purpose of the service animal. If the Team determines that it can and proposes alternative accommodations and/or services, then the request to allow a service animal may be denied. This determination will be made on a case-by-case basis.
4. Springfield Public Schools may not ask about the nature or extent of an individual's disability but may make two inquiries to determine whether an animal qualifies as a service animal: (1) whether the animal is required because of a disability; and (2) what work or task the animal has been trained to perform that is directly related to the individual's disability. The task performed by the service animal must address one of the following needs for the disabled individual: physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual or other mental disability. Springfield Public Schools may not make these inquiries when it is readily apparent that an animal is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability.
5. The service animal must be at all times controlled by its handler.
6. The service animal must be housebroken.
7. The owner of a service animal must provide annual proof that the animal is up to date on all of its Massachusetts required vaccinations.
8. The service animal must be treated for, and kept free of, fleas and ticks.
9. A service animal must be kept clean and groomed to avoid shedding and dander.
10. The owner of a service animal is liable for any harm or injury caused by the animal to other students, staff, visitors, and/or property. The student's parent/guardian will be required to sign a waiver of liability prior to the service animal coming to the school or to the school sponsored activity.
11. Springfield Public Schools is responsible for providing a safe learning environment for students, teachers, and staff. If the presence of a service animal poses a health or

safety risk to another member of the school community, as documented by a physician, the school will weigh the needs of all parties and will put forth a plan to provide reasonable accommodations. This scenario is most likely to be raised in the context of a severe, life threatening allergy. The Springfield Public Schools will assess each situation on a case-by-case basis and may exclude the service animal if the animal's presence poses a direct and immediate threat to the health, safety, and well-being of anyone who will come in contact with the service animal.

12. Miniature Horses: Requests to permit a miniature horse to accompany a student or adult with a disability in school buildings, in classroom, or at school functions, will be handled on a case-by-case basis, considering:
 - a. The type, size, and weight of the miniature horse and whether the facility can accommodate these features, and
 - b. Whether the handler has sufficient control of the miniature horse, and
 - c. Whether the miniature horse is housebroken, and
 - d. Whether the miniature horse's presence in a specific facility compromises legitimate safety requirements that are necessary for safe operation.
13. Removal of a Service Animal: A school building administrator may ask an individual with a disability or his parent/guardian to remove a service animal from a school building, a classroom, or from a school function if any one of the following circumstances occurs:
 - a. The animal is not in control of its handler and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control it.
 - b. The animal is not housebroken.
 - c. The animal's presence poses a direct and immediate threat to the health or safety of others.
14. A service animal must have a harness, leash, or other tether, unless either the handler is unable because of a disability to use a harness, leash, or other tether, or the use of a harness, leash, or other tether would interfere with the service animal's safe effective performance of work or tasks, in which case the service animal must be otherwise under the handler's control.
15. The Springfield Public Schools is not responsible for the care or supervision of a service animal, including walking or feeding the animal or responding to the animal's need to relieve itself. The Springfield Public Schools is not responsible for providing a staff member to walk the service animal or to provide any other care or assistance to the animal. Students with service animals are expected to care and supervise their animal. In the case of a young child or a student with disabilities who is unable to care for or supervise his service animal, the parent is responsible for providing care and supervision of the animal. Issues related to the care and supervision of service animals will be addressed on a case-by-case basis in the discretion of the building administrator.

16. Springfield Public Schools will educate students and staff in a building or classroom with a service animal, the difference between service animals and pets to ensure that students do not interfere with the service animal's work.
17. When a student will be accompanied by a service animal at school or in other Springfield Public School facilities on a regular basis, such student's parent/guardian as well as the animal's owner and any other person who will have custody and control of the animal, will be required to sign a document stating they have read and understood the foregoing.