



Animals in School Policy

I. POLICY

Providence Hall Charter School (PHCS) 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, PHCS 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 PHCS to notify parents/guardians of students in a classroom when an animal is being introduced. PHCS supports the inclusion of service animals as part of its compliance with Federal and State law as well as believes 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.

II. PROCEDURES

A. Animals Brought to School for Short Term/Day Visits

1. During school hours, no animal will be brought to school without prior authorization. Students must obtain permission from their teacher, who will obtain authorization from a school administrator, and make arrangements for the animal visit 48 hours in advance. Animals brought to school at pick up and drop off times must be leashed. PHCS also asks that all animals be trained.
2. Proof (from a veterinarian) of compliance with immunizations for any disease that can be transmitted to humans shall be filed with the office in advance. All mammals will be properly vaccinated. Rabies vaccination is required for any mammal.
3. 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 specified adult.
4. Animals are NOT to be transported on school buses.
5. No wild animals or protected animals will be purposely brought to a school building or 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 a school administrator.

B. Animals Considered as Resident Class Pets

1. Permission of a school administrator is required prior to establishing resident animals in the classroom. Classroom pets that are of an unknown origin/history are not permitted in school. Teachers assume primary responsibility for the humane and proper treatment of any animal in their classroom.
2. When the school is not in session for more than three days, the teacher must make arrangements for any resident animal's care and safety.
3. 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/guardians will be notified. A copy of the incident report (signed by a school administrator) will be sent to the involved family with personally identifiable information involving other children redacted as needed.



C. Service Animals

1. The use of service animals is not subject to the restrictions of this policy. Restricting the presence of service animals on campus is subject only to the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 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.
2. 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.
3. PHCS reserves the right to restrict a service animal from its premises when it is determined that the animal'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, a school administrator, parents/guardians, and student, will be formed to develop a comprehensive 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 school administrator. Determination of threat will be made in consultation with the school's child protection team (including a counselor and school administrator).

D. Students with Medical Concerns

1. Student health issues will be considered when assessing the appropriateness of animals in the classroom. Prior to the consideration of the introduction of an animal to the classroom, the teacher will confer with the school administrator and parent/guardian to review the student health records to assure that there is no conflict.
2. Conflicts or concerns with animals and students with medical reactions to those animals will be referred to a school administrator. It is the policy of PHCS 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, a school administrator is responsible for resolving the matter in consultation with the involved parties, the school Health and Safety Chair, and any others the school administrator deems appropriate.

E. Law Enforcement

Animals under the control of a law enforcement officer are excluded from the provisions of this policy.

III. 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, or training of the animal or the owner's knowledge of such viciousness, or training. All teachers will consult with a school administrator prior to the introduction of an animal in the classroom.

IV. 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, and keep the animal and students safe. The animal should not be able to get out of the enclosure by itself. Animals will be kept in an environment appropriate to the species. Habitats will be maintained and cleaned regularly by staff not students, if it is safe for the students to do so (determined by the teacher).