



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

SERVICE ANIMALS

AP No. 0113

Effective Date: June 8, 2026

- I. **PURPOSE:** To establish procedures for the use of service animals by Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS) students, employees, and visitors to PGCPS properties and PGCPS-sponsored functions.
- II. **POLICY:**
- A. The Board of Education of Prince George’s County (Board) is committed to providing all students, employees, and third parties with equal opportunity in PGCPS workplaces, and educational programs and activities, and promotes compliance with all federal and state nondiscrimination laws and regulations.
- B. The Board is also deeply committed to providing every student with equitable access to the educational opportunities, rigor, resources, and supports that are designed to maximize the student’s academic success and physical, psychological, and social/emotional well-being, and ensure all staff are empowered to do their best work. (Board Policy 0113 – Service Animals)
- III. **BACKGROUND:** PGCPS acknowledges its responsibility to permit individuals with disabilities to be accompanied by service animals in its facilities, school buildings, classrooms, or at PGCPS-sponsored functions, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008.
- IV. **DEFINITIONS:**
- A. *Animal in training* – A dog that does not currently meet the definition of “service animal” but is undergoing a process of instruction designed to lead to its employment as a service animal. An *animal in training* is owned by an accredited organization that trains dogs for future employment as service animals, and that organization is responsible for any damages or injuries caused by its dog.

- B. *Emotional support animal* – An animal that may provide companionship, relieve loneliness, or help with anxiety or depression, but is not specially trained to perform tasks that assist people with disabilities. An *emotional support animal*, comfort animal, or therapy dog, is not a service animal under Title II and Title III of the ADA.
- C. *Employee* – A full-time or part-time permanent or temporary worker, including a substitute teacher, employed by PGCPS. An *employee* also includes an independent contractor and vendor, contractors’ and vendors’ employees, and a volunteer.
- D. *Handler* – A person who is responsible for the care, supervision, and behavior of the service animal.
- E. *Housebroken service animal* – One that has been trained to eliminate outside or in a designated indoor spot, rather than inside the school or in a public area. This means the handler is responsible for the animal's waste and must clean it up immediately and appropriately, and in an outdoor dumpster.
- F. *Individual with a disability* –
 - 1. A person with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
 - 2. A person with a record of such an impairment; or
 - 3. A person regarded as having such an impairment.
 - a. An individual is regarded as having such an impairment if the individual is subjected to a prohibited action because of an actual or perceived physical or mental impairment, whether or not that impairment substantially limits, or is perceived to substantially limit, a major life activity, even if the Board asserts, or may or does ultimately establish, a defense to the action prohibited by the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - b. An individual is not regarded as having such an impairment if the Board demonstrates that the impairment is, objectively, both transitory (lasting or expected to last six months or less) and minor.
- G. *School property* – Any property owned or leased by PGCPS or used by PGCPS for school-related and/or school-sponsored activities. The concept of *school property* extends to school activities such as field trips, use of parks and recreation facilities, and school buses, etc. Facilities scheduled by PGCPS for students’ use are considered an extension of *school property*.

- H. *Service animal* – Any dog, or under specific circumstances, a trained miniature horse, which is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Work or tasks include, but are not limited to:
1. Guiding individuals with impaired vision;
 2. Alerting individuals with impaired hearing to sounds;
 3. Pulling a wheelchair;
 4. Fetching dropped items; or
 5. Detecting the onset of a seizure.
- I. *Service animal plan* – A *service animal plan* outlines how a school or PGCPS facility will accommodate a service animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The plan integrates the animal into a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.
- J. *Student Intervention Team (SIT)* – A school-based problem-solving team comprised of faculty members, usually general educators, who meet to help a teacher(s) identify and implement appropriate interventions for students who need support so that they are ready and able to learn, as well as students who are in need of support for academic acceleration.
- K. *Visitors* – Any person who has legitimate school business, to include, but not limited to parent-teacher conferences, pre-arranged classroom visits, classroom observation, attendance at other school events or appointments with school employees.

V. **PROCEDURES:**

- A. Access to Public Services, Programs, or Activities
1. Individuals with disabilities are permitted to be accompanied by their service animals in all school property areas as relevant, where members of the public, students, and employees are allowed to go.
 2. When an individual with a disability brings a service animal to school property, PGCPS employees **shall not** ask about the nature or extent of a person’s

disability, but may make the following two inquiries to determine whether an animal qualifies as a service animal:

- a. If the animal is required because of a disability; and
 - b. What work or task the animal has been trained to perform on behalf of the disabled person.
3. PGCPS employees shall not make these inquiries of an individual with a disability bringing a service animal to school property when it is readily apparent that an animal is trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability (*e.g.*, the dog is observed guiding the individual who is blind or has low vision, is pulling a person's wheelchair, or is providing assistance with stability or balance and the individual has an observable mobility disability).
 4. PGCPS employees shall not require documentation, such as proof that the animal has been certified, trained, or licensed as a service animal.
 5. If an admission fee is charged for entry to a PGCPS event, the Board shall not require the purchase of a separate ticket or charge any additional amount for the admission of a service animal or an animal in training or being raised as a service animal.

B. Requirements

1. The service animal must be a dog or, under certain conditions, a miniature horse.
2. The service animal must be trained to do work or a task for the individual with a disability.
3. The service animal must have current vaccinations as required by local, county, and state laws.
4. A service animal must be under the control of its handler, who is responsible for the care and supervision of their service animal. 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 (*e.g.*, voice control, signals, or other effective means).

- a. If a service animal behaves in an unacceptable way (*i.e.*, uncontrolled barking, jumping on other people, running away from the handler) or that is a direct threat to the health or safety of others (*i.e.*, growling at others) and the individual with a disability does not control the service animal, PGCPSS does not have to allow the service animal on school property.
5. PGCPSS is not responsible for the care or supervision of a service animal (see also Section V.F. below).
6. Employees with disabilities using service animals and parents/guardians of students with disabilities using service animals shall proactively collaborate with the school principal/designee to plan for the service animal at school. (Employees may also work with the Office of Equity Assurance to develop a service animal plan.) The following are examples of arrangements that may be considered, as necessary:
 - a. A rest place and rest time for the service animal.
 - b. Appropriate areas and times of the day for the service animal to relieve itself, including designated waste receptacles outside of the building.
 - c. Information, as needed, for employees and students about the service animal.
 - d. Clarification, as needed, of emergency procedures.
7. Individuals with disabilities, employees, or parents/guardians of students with disabilities, who are assisted by service animals, are responsible for providing supplies and equipment needed by the service animal.
8. Emotional support animals are not service animals under Title II and Title III of the ADA and do not qualify as service animals.

C. Miniature Horses

1. In assessing whether a miniature horse may be permitted on school property as a service animal, the Service Animal Review Committee shall consider the following factors:
 - a. The type, size, and weight of the miniature horse and whether the school property can accommodate these features;
 - b. Whether the handler has sufficient control of the miniature horse;

- c. Whether the miniature horse is housebroken; and
 - d. Whether the miniature horse's presence on the school property compromises legitimate safety requirements that are necessary for safe operation.
2. Sections I through V of this administrative procedure shall also apply to miniature horses.

D. Reasonable Accommodations for Service Animals

1. Visitors to PGCPS events or sponsored activities do not have to submit reasonable accommodations request for service animals.
2. The Office of Equity Assurance is the resource for PGCPS employees who may require service animals and is responsible for assisting employees and schools, as necessary, with making reasonable accommodations for service animals required by employees. PGCPS will not provide service animals to employees. An employee or applicant for employment who requires a service animal on school property must comply with Administrative Procedures 4172. Attachment A of this administrative procedure must be completed for employees who wish to be accompanied by a service animal at work.
3. The PGCPS Department of Student Services – Office of 504 or Department of Special Education – is the resource for parents/guardians of students who may require service animals and is responsible for assisting parents, guardians, students, and schools with making arrangements for service animals required by students. If a student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan, a team meeting will be held to discuss the reasonable accommodation and develop a service animal plan.
4. A PGCPS Service Animal Review Committee (Committee) may be convened to serve as a resource to the IEP team, the 504 team, and the school maintaining the service animal when addressing the logistics of the service animal plan. The Committee will include at least three (3) of the following representatives as appropriate:
 - a. Associate Superintendent Supporting Services/designee;
 - b. Associate Superintendent for Special Education/designee;
 - c. Associate Superintendent for Student Services/designee;

- d. Area Associate Superintendent /designee;
- e. Director of Building Services/designee;
- f. Director of Transportation/designee;
- g. PGCPS Environmental Specialist/designee; and
- h. Supervisor of Health Services or Designee.

E. Allergies and Sensitivities

Efforts will be made to accommodate individuals with allergies or sensitivities to animals. Any concerns or conflicts should be shared with the school administration and will be addressed promptly on a case by case basis by the Committee and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

F. Liability and Care

1. Owners of service animals are liable for any harm or injury caused by the animal to other students, staff, visitors, and/or property.
 - a. As part of the service animal plan, the principal or facility administrator shall be responsible for informing the school/facility community about the different aspects of the plan and most importantly, interaction with the service animal, *e.g.*, students should not touch, pet, hit, etc. the service animal.
2. The handler is responsible for the care and supervision of the service animal, including feeding, toileting, grooming, and veterinary care. Toileting must occur in designated outdoor areas away from areas of student activity (*e.g.*, playground, or other student play/gathering areas) or use, or in a pet relief area identified by the school. Service animals must be clean. Daily grooming and occasional baths may be required to keep the service animal odor to a minimum. Adequate flea prevention and control may be required.
3. Students with service animals are expected to care for and supervise their animals. In the case of a young child or a student with disabilities who is unable to care for or supervise their service animal, the parent/guardian is responsible for providing care and supervision of the service animal. If a parent/guardian accompanies a child, the parent/guardian must undergo the required background check and fingerprinting in accordance with Administrative Procedure 4125. Issues related

to the care and supervision of service animals will be addressed on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the school principal/designee and documented in the service animal plan.

G. Removal or Exclusion of a Service Animal

1. A school principal/designee or facility administrator may ask an individual with a disability or parents/guardians of a student to remove a service animal from school property if any one of the following circumstances occurs:
 - a. The service animal behaves in unacceptable way (as defined in section V.B.4), and the service animal's handler does not take effective action to control it;
 - b. The service animal is not housebroken; or
 - c. The service animal's presence would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity (*i.e.*, an area with high risk of danger to the service animal).
 - d. Fears of allergies or cleanliness generally do not permit exclusion of the service animal, nor other individuals' fear of the service animal. However, in rare situations (*e.g.*, where the lack of cleanliness leads to an infestation of fleas in a classroom, or a service animal's vaccinations are not up-to-date), the service animal may be temporarily excluded until the handler resolves the issue. (Note, however, that PGCPs may not demand vaccination records as a condition of entry onto school property.)
2. The Committee may serve as a resource to the school principal or facility administrator that is dealing with a potential removal or exclusion of a service animal.
3. If a service animal is properly excluded, PGCPs shall give the individual with a disability the opportunity to participate in the service, program, or activity without having the service animal on the premises.

H. Service Animals in Training

1. PGCPs permits service animals in training on school property, under the conditions specified below.
 - a. The training cannot disrupt or interfere with the school's education process. It is not expected that training would normally take place in the classroom during instructional time.

- b. No more than one service animal in training is permitted at a particular school at any time. The service animal in training must be at least six (6) months old.
- c. The organization that owns the service animal in training must provide the following:
 - 1) Documentation of immunization, proof of liability insurance, and assurances that the service animal is housebroken and at least six (6) months old.
 - 2) A plan, submitted to the school principal/designee, describing how the service animal will be managed in the school, including arrangements detailed in sections above.
 - 3) A harness, vest, leash, or other appropriate equipment identifying the animal as a service animal in training, which the service animal must wear at all times while on school property.
- d. A service animal in training may be excluded from school property if admitting the animal would create a clear danger of a disturbance or physical harm to an individual in the place.
- e. At the discretion of the school's principal/designee, PGCPS may grant access to the school by a trainer from the organization who is part of a three-unit service animal team and is conducting continuing training of a service animal on school property for school-related business or activities.

I. Appeals

1. Student Appeals

A parent/guardian's appeal of a service animal decision must be made in accordance with the procedural safeguards provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as appropriate.

2. Employee Appeals

An employee's appeal of a service animal decision must be made in accordance with Administrative Procedure 4172.

3. Visitor Appeals

- a. If a visitor with a service animal is denied access to school property, which includes school-sponsored activities, they may immediately contact a School

Support Associate Superintendent/Area Office or for a facility, the Associate Superintendent of Supporting Services for immediate resolution.

- b. If the School Support Associate Superintendent/Area Office or the Associate Superintendent of Supporting Services denies access and the visitor is aggrieved by the decision, the visitor may file an appeal with the Board within 30 calendar days of the decision.

VI. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE:

- A. The school principal/designee is responsible for informing students, staff members, and parents/guardians annually of the general provisions of this administrative procedure.
- B. The school principal/designee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of a student's service animal plan.
- C. The Equity Assurance Office is responsible for responding to requests for a service animal reasonable accommodation by PGCPs employees and contractors and to support the employee with the development of the service animal plan.

VII. LEGAL REFERENCES:

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA), 42 USC §§ 12101, *et seq.* (28 CFR §§ 35.104, 35.107, 35.108, 35.130(b)(7), and 35.136)
MD. CODE ANN., HUM. SRVCS. §§ 7-701, 7-704, and 7-705
Prince George's County Code of Ordinances, §§ 3-101, 3-116.01, 3-185.01 (1997)

VIII. RELATED BOARD POLICIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES:

Board Policy 0102 – Culturally Proficient Schools and Central Offices
Board Policy 0113 – Service Animals
Board Policy 0118 – Mission, Vision, and Core Values
Administrative Procedure 0102 – Culturally Responsive Schools and Central Offices
Administrative Procedure 4170 – Discrimination and Harassment
Administrative Procedure 4172 – Processing Requests for Reasonable Accommodation
Administrative Procedure 10101 – Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook

IX. MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THIS ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE:

The Division of Academics, Department of Special Education, the Division of School Support and Leadership, Department of Student Services and the Office of Equity Assurance will be responsible for updating this administrative procedure as needed.

X. HISTORY:

Adopted 06/08/2026

XI. EFFECTIVE DATE: June 8, 2026

Attachment A: Request for Reasonable Accommodations (Attachment 1 to AP 4172)