



Therapy Dog Policy



Context

A Therapy Dog is a dog that has been trained and certified to work with its owner to provide affection and comfort to people.

Psychological, physiological and social benefits derived through interaction with Therapy Dogs are:

- / Increased self-esteem and well-being
- / Reduced stress and anxiety
- / Increased positive mood
- / Tactile stimulation
- / Memory and problem-solving stimulation
- / Increased oxytocin and dopamine levels
- / Reduced heart rate and blood pressure

Therapy Dogs will complement the care and support offered to students through the College's counselling support and pastoral care, by providing emotional support and comfort to students.

This Policy applies to all staff, students, contractors and visitors to the College and complies with the following legislation:

- / Companion Animals Act (1998)
- / Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1979)
- / Animal Research Act 1985 (NSW)



Principles

- / That Therapy Dogs will be used in accordance with the education priorities and values that underpin St Ignatius' College.
- / That Therapy Dogs will accord with the legislative requirements associated with student safety.
- / The appropriate records will be kept relating to the use of Therapy Dogs at the College.
- / That the dog owner has primary responsibility for the training, certification and insurance of the animal.
- / That Therapy Dogs will be used in a counselling setting to provide emotional support and comfort to students.
- / Communication surrounding the use of Therapy Dogs will be undertaken by the College to ensure that all are aware of, and able to support the program.



Procedures

1. Requests and approval

All requests for Therapy Dogs must be made in writing by the dog owner, to the College Executive via the Principal, with the consent of the Head of Regis, or the Deputy Principal Students.

Requests must detail how the dog will be used for therapy purposes to complement the care and support offered to students through the College's counselling support and pastoral care.

The College Executive is responsible for approving all individual requests in accordance with this Policy.

Permission for individual Therapy Dogs will be granted by the Principal, following required training and certification, in accordance with the Companions Animal Act (1998) and this Policy.

The dog owner must sign that they have read and agree to this Policy as part of the approval process.

2. Training and certification

Only dogs who have successfully undergone training, a Public Access Test (PAT) and who have been accredited as Therapy Dogs through a training and testing provider endorsed by Saint Ignatius' College Riverview, will be used at the College as Therapy Dog. The dog owner must provide evidence of the dog's training and certification to the College.

3. Responsibilities and delegations

ANIMAL WELFARE LIAISON OFFICER (AWLO)

The Animal Welfare Liaison Officer is responsible for:

Adding all staff working with the dog to the College's Animal Research Authority, issued by the Schools Animal Care and Ethics Committee (SACEC)

Monitoring Therapy Dog use at the College to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, this Policy and SACEC.

Ensuring the dog owner maintains appropriate records as required by this Policy relating to the use of the Therapy Dog at the College.

DOG OWNER

The dog owner is responsible for:

- / Overall dog welfare
- / Dog health and hygiene
- / Maintaining appropriate records including a timetable and sign in/sign out system for the times the Therapy Dog was used, and observations/outcomes from use of the dog with students
- / All costs associated with the dog including, but not limited to: training, certification, insurance, microchip, food, vaccination and veterinary
- / Any property damage caused by the Therapy Dog
- / Taking the dog outside to the designated relief area



- / Adhering to this Policy
- / Ensuring the care and use of the Therapy Dog is in accordance with all relevant legislation, advice, standards and guidelines
- / Carrying out close and competent supervision of students engaging with the Therapy Dog
- / Ensuring the dog is signed in and out of the College and its timetable maintained on a daily basis.

4. Supervision and control of Therapy Dogs

The Staff member who is the primary carer and owner of the dog is responsible for the dog.

Students must never be left unattended with the Therapy Dog. The dog owner must be present any time students engage with the Therapy Dog.

Students must not approach or disturb a Therapy Dog who is eating or sleeping.

The Therapy Dog must be kept on a short unretractable lead and under full control and supervision of the dog owner when moving between classrooms or areas of the College.

The Therapy Dog must only enter areas of the College permitted as part of the approval, such as Counsellor's Office. For example, the Therapy Dog must not enter a classroom or library unless the Principal grants permission for the dog to enter these areas.

The dog owner will train students how to appropriately interact with the dog at all times.

5. Identification of Therapy Dogs

Therapy Dogs are required to wear an identification vest at all times while on College property.

All Therapy Dogs must be microchipped and registered with the local council in which they are kept.

6. Insurance and Risk Management

The dog owner is responsible for all insurance costs associated with the Therapy Dog.

The dog owner must ensure there is adequate insurance cover for the Therapy Dog, evidence of which must be provided to the College Business Manager on an annual basis.

Under Section 25 of the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW) the owner of a dog is liable for damages in respect of:

- / Bodily injury to a person caused by the dog wounding or attacking that person, and
- / Damage to the personal property of a person (including clothing) caused by the dog in the course of attacking that person.

The College will ensure a risk assessment is conducted and reviewed annually, or as required, for individual Therapy Dogs.

7. Therapy dog behaviour and temperament

Suitability of a dog's temperament will be assessed during the selection processes. Dogs that have difficult temperaments, for example - dogs that are fearful, timid or dominant must not be used as Therapy Dogs.



The dog owner is responsible for continually monitoring the temperament of the dog and remove the dog from the College if it becomes agitated or nervous.

8. Removal of Therapy Dog

The Therapy Dog will be immediately removed from the College and not allowed to return to the College grounds if:

- / The dog bites a person or other animal. A bite is defined as the dog's teeth breaking the skin or causing a bruise.
- / The dog is declared dangerous
- / The dog displays aggressive behaviour towards a person or animal
- / The dog owner fails to comply with this policy

9. Therapy dog health, hygiene and welfare

Prior to coming onto the College grounds, the dog owner must ensure the Therapy Dog:

- / Is clean and well groomed
- / Washed regularly
- / Nails trimmed
- / Free of ticks and fleas
- / Vaccinated

The dog owner must ensure the Therapy Dog does not attend the College if unwell or injured.

It is the responsibility of the owner that all dogs are vaccinated appropriately.

The dog owner must ensure the Therapy Dog is provided with:

- / A quiet student free area for time out.
- / Adequate food and water.

The dog owner must not put the Therapy Dog in a threatening or questionable situation.

The Therapy Dog must not urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations. If they do, the owner will be responsible for cleaning up the excrement and for any cleaning costs to sanitise the environment, if required.

The dog owner must ensure the Therapy Dog is taken to the designated relief area regularly to toilet, immediately cleaning up after the dog, and disposing of waste in accordance with the College's waste disposal requirements.

All persons must wash their hands before and after handling the Therapy Dog.

10. Allergies / medical

All Therapy Dogs must be hypoallergenic.

Any person with a known allergic reaction to dogs must not have contact with the dog.

11. Student expectations

Students are to be respectful of the Therapy Dog at all times.



Students are not to:

- / Feed the dog
- / Disturb the dog while sleeping, eating or drinking
- / Put their face near the dog
- / Stare into the dog's eyes
- / Walk the dog
- / Be alone with the dog (i.e. dog owner must be present at all times)

12. Consent

The College must attain written consent from parents/caregivers prior to any student working with a Therapy Dog. Consent must be obtained annually.



Further information

Further information or assistance about anything contained in this document can be sought from the Head of Risk and Compliance or the College Animal Welfare Officer.

Approved date : 3 April 2019

Review date : April 2021

Dr Paul Hine

Principal