

READING EDUCATION ASSISTANCE DOGS (R.E.A.D.)

Prepared: August 2012

Note: Service Animals are not included in this document. See Policy 899 for Service Animals. See also "Care of Facilities" for a general statement about animals in the schools.

Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.) is a trademark program of Intermountain Therapy Animals (ITA). The R.E.A.D. program or other such approved program, prepares therapy animals volunteering with their owner/handlers as a team to visit schools, libraries and other settings as reading companions for children. The team establishes an environment for reading aloud that is relaxed, comfortable, safe and nonjudgmental. Most children find that reading aloud to an animal trained for this purpose can be empowering and fun.

Registered therapy animals have been trained and tested for health, safety, appropriate skills and temperament. Robbinsdale Area Schools permits the R.E.A.D. program in the elementary schools under the following conditions:

A. Prior Approval

At least two weeks prior to the school visit, the building principal meets with the owner/handler of the registered therapy animal. Together they create a plan and complete the following forms, which are to be kept on file with the principal.

1. R.E.A.D. Therapy Animal Team Application and Care Plan
2. R.E.A.D. Therapy Animal Team Handler Agreement

Completing the Volunteer Placement Process

Prior to volunteering, the owners/handlers are required to complete the district's placement process through Volunteers In Partnership (VIP). This includes the successful completion of the VIP application, interview/orientation, and reference or criminal background check depending on whether there is line sight supervision of the volunteer by district staff. The owner/handler begins the placement process by contacting the VIP coordinator, Jill Kaufman at 763.504.6991 or jill_kaufman@rdale.org. The placement process can take up to 2 weeks to complete.

The school principal contacts the families of children who will regularly interact with the R.E.A.D. program to obtain written permission (See R.E.A.D. Program Family Agreement).

B. Registered Therapy Team

The district permits animals in the schools for the sole purpose of establishing a safe and non-judgmental environment for a child to read aloud. The district does not permit the use of therapy animals for any purpose other than that described by R.E.A.D.

The owner/handler must maintain current registration with a nationally recognized entity such as Delta Society, Therapy Dogs Incorporated, or Intermountain Therapy Animals.

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C. Liability

The therapy animal must remain under the control of the owner/handler at all times. The animal must be restrained on a leash or contained in a suitable carrier. The handler is responsible for the animal's behavior and is liable for all damages suffered by persons who may be bitten or injured by the animal, and all damages to public or private property. The owner/handler's therapy team registration insurance coverage for the therapy team is applicable only when the team is volunteering. The district does not permit compensation to therapy animal owners/handlers.

D. Humane Treatment of Therapy Animals

During the school visit the therapy animal must be handled, treated, and housed in a humane manner. Students or staff members who are found to have mistreated, abused, or otherwise injured the animal on school property will be disciplined by the school administration and may be referred to local law enforcement authorities.

E. Removal of Animals

The District reserves the right to remove the therapy animal from school property at any time and without provocation. Serious cases may be referred to local law enforcement agencies. Removing the therapy animal from district property may include, but is not limited to, the following circumstances:

- The animal is out of control and/or the animal's handler does not effectively control the animal's behavior.
- The animal is not housetrained, not hygienic, or the animal's presence or behavior fundamentally interferes in the functions of the school.
- The animal has demonstrated a direct threat to the health or safety of others.

F. Reporting an Injury to/from Animals

Any injuries caused or received by the therapy animal must be reported immediately to the principal and the school nurse. A completed Incident/Accident Report (see Employee Portal) is retained and the principal informs the parent or guardian of the injury to the student or the animal.

G. Student and Family Privacy

The handler must protect the privacy of the student and family at all times and is not permitted to share information about the child's reading experience with anyone other than the child's parents, school principal or the child's teacher(s). In the event that a child discloses personal information during the reading session, the handler is to inform the school principal as soon as the session closes.

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Therapy Team Application and Care Plan

This form is to be completed by the building principal

Name of Requesting School Principal _____

Name of Therapy Team Handler _____

Therapy Animal Species/Breed/Name _____

Day & Time for Visit at School _____

Requested Start Date at School _____

As the requesting principal I agree to:

- Limit the visits of the therapy team to no more than 2 hours per day and no more than 3 days per week
- Obtain written permission from the parents of student(s) who regularly interact with the therapy animal
- Provide the family with additional information about the R.E.A.D. program
- Remind the family that a child who suffers from severe allergies or asthma is not a good candidate, and that children who become uncooperative will be removed from the program
- Advise the therapy team of school emergency/evacuation procedures.
- Support the therapy team as the animal is introduced to the students and help the students understand how to meet and greet the therapy animal; inform all staff about the R.E.A.D. program.
- Remind students to wash/sanitize their hands after petting the therapy animal.
- Provide a suitable space that is outside of the classroom where the session can take place and ensure reasonable privacy for the child during the reading session.

Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

Note: This application and care plan expires at the end of the current school year.

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Therapy Animal Team Handler Agreement

This form is to be completed by the team handler

Name of therapy team handler _____ Date _____

Home address _____ Phone and email contact information _____

Therapy animal species/breed/name _____

As the therapy animal owner/handler I agree to:

- Follow the procedures for using Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.).
- Register with the main office before each visit to the school and announce the presence of the dog
- Wear proper therapy team identification and a school name tag all times
- Ensure that my dog is wearing proper identification
- Remain the only handler of my therapy dog when it visits the school for the R.E.A.D. program
- Maintain control of my dog at all times to ensure the safety of students, staff members and the animal while in school
- Ensure that my dog relieves him/herself on a grassy area away from the sidewalks where the public may congregate as discussed with the school principal
- Ensure that dog's waste is disposed of in a tiered plastic bag and placed in a designated trash bin
- Ensure that, when in the building, my dog is on a leash or in suitable housing at all times.
- When not in a container, have my dog lie on a mat with the top side labeled; roll the mat when leaving the room to prevent the spread of dog hair.
- Ensure that my dog's housing is clean, sanitary and free of odor.
- Clean up any body fluid accidents immediately and notify building maintenance to follow up with any industrial cleaning/sanitizing products.
- Be liable for any damages suffered by persons who may be injured by my dog and any damages to public or private property.

Attached is:

- A copy of my current therapy team registration
- A copy of my dog's vaccination record
- A copy of my R.E.A.D. training papers
- Proof that I passed a therapy team evaluation within the last two years (for teams registered with organizations other than Intermountain Therapy Animals).

Therapy Team Handler Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

This handler agreement expires at the end of the current school year.

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R.E.A.D. Program Family Agreement

This portion is to be completed by the school principal or designee

Name of parent/guardian _____

Full name of child to participate in R.E.A.D. program _____

Description of how, when, and for how long the child will participate in the R.E.A.D. program

This portion is to be completed by the family

I understand that

_____ My child will participate in the R.E.A.D. Program in the manner described above

_____ I will be notified before any alterations to this plan are initiated

_____ I can have my child exit the program at any time by phoning the school and making the request, and that my child will be removed from the program if he/she is uncooperative

_____ My child's proficiency in reading is dependent on many variables, and that the school makes no claim that my child's reading proficiency will improve solely as a result of participating in the R.E.A.D. program

_____ My child may be photographed during a session with the R.E.A.D. animal unless I specify otherwise

Given the written plan as described above, I agree to have my child participate in the Reading Education Assistance Dog (R.E.A.D.) program at my child's school.

Signature of parent/guardian _____ Date _____

This family agreement expires at the end of the current school year