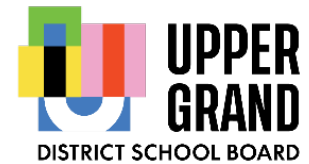


# Therapy Dogs in Schools Protocol

## P.13



### Philosophy

Therapy dogs are interactive dogs trained to work for a Handler to provide service and comfort to people. The presence of a therapy dog can decrease anxiety and provide a level of comfort that enables students to work through a variety of challenging issues. Their responsibilities are to provide psychological or physiological therapy to individuals other than their Handlers. It is important to note that therapy dogs are **not** service dogs. Service dogs are trained to perform tasks to ease their handlers' disabilities, helping them to attain safety and independence.

### Definitions

#### Child Certified Therapy Dog Team

This refers to a Handler and dog team that have successfully passed the tests and monitored visits necessary to be certified to work with children as well as adults. In Ontario, this certification can be granted only by a recognized therapy dog organization (e.g., Therapeutic Paws of Canada, St. John's Ambulance).

#### School Community

This refers to students, parents, volunteers, school council, union representatives, and all employees of the Upper Grand District School Board ("UGDSB").

#### The Handler

This term refers to the adult dog handler that was part of the certification process for a particular dog. The adult dog handler must accompany its therapy dog at all times.

### Protocol

The Principal will initiate the use of therapy dogs in schools. Principals may approve the use of a **Child Certified Therapy Dog Team** in their schools to provide service and comfort to its students. The therapy dog organization may offer therapy visit programs (such as Therapeutic Paws of Canada's Paws to Read® program or the 'Paws 4 Stories' program at St. John's Ambulance), which must be approved by the Principal. Any structured visiting schedule must be detailed in a separate document provided by the therapy dog organization and subject to the approval of all involved parties prior to commencing visits.

Approval must be given/renewed each school year and/or whenever the Handler wishes to use a different therapy dog. The Principal of the school has the authority to end any arrangement pertaining to the use of therapy dogs at any time at their discretion. Once approved, the following procedures will be followed prior to the admittance of a therapy dog into the school.

Responsibilities of the Handler:

1. In addition to student safety, the Handler agrees that the therapy dog's physical and mental health will be their priority.
2. The Handler will ensure that the Principal is provided with evidence that the Therapy Dog Team is certified to work with children.
3. The Handler will provide a police record check with vulnerable sector screening (VSS).  
**At no time will the Handler and dog be alone with students.**
4. The Handler will ensure that the Principal always has an up-to-date vaccination certificate for the dog, which includes proof of vaccinations for rabies, distemper, parvovirus and adenovirus (hepatitis).
5. The Handler will provide to the Principal evidence of \$2 million general liability insurance through their respective therapy dog organization. If the organization's liability coverage does not extend to its Handlers and dogs, the Handler will provide evidence of \$2 million general liability coverage for themselves and the dog. The Handler acknowledges that the UGDSB does not carry liability and/or medical insurance for the Handler or dog and is not responsible if the dog is lost, stolen or injured.
6. The Handler will sign a Therapy Dogs in Schools Agreement, attached as Appendix B, and provide the Principal with a copy of the Child Certified Therapy Dog Team's schedule of school visits.
7. The dog will always be under the direct control and supervision of the Handler. The Handler will be aware of the dog's behaviour at all times. If any changes in behaviour occur that may affect the safety of the children, the Handler will immediately remove the dog from the school and notify the Principal.

8. The Handler will wear at all times, while representing their organization, an approved visiting Team Shirt and the therapy dog must wear its dog vest. The Handler's attention must be dedicated to the dog and their interactions with students and staff.
9. The Handler will ensure that the dog is always on a 6-foot leash that is held by the Handler, with a flat buckle collar or approved harness, inside and outside the school. The Handler shall assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to school property or injury to UGDSB staff, students or others in the school caused by the therapy dog while on school property.
10. The Handler will be solely responsible for the supervision and humane care of the therapy dog, including any feeding, exercising and cleaning up after the therapy dog while the therapy dog is on school property. The Handler will ensure that the therapy dog while on school property is clean, well-groomed, house broken, free of injury or illness, and of the temperament appropriate for working with children and others in the school.
11. The Handler will take responsibility for educating staff, students, and the community on the role of the dog.
12. The Handler will immediately inform the Principal of any incident of injury of any kind that involves the therapy dog and/or the Handler.
13. If the Handler is a UGDSB employee, the following guidelines will **also** apply:
  - 13.1 The Handler can only be working in this capacity during times that they are not performing their regular duties as employees of the UGDSB. For teaching staff, this could include, with the Principal's permission, time prior to the beginning of the school day, lunch hour (if not performing duties related to supervision, APA's etc.), planning time, or after school. **The staff member cannot at any time assume the role of Handler when responsible for the care and supervision of students.** A detailed schedule must be approved by the Principal and communicated to staff. The Principal must be informed in advance of any changes to the schedule.
  - 13.2 The therapy dog is not to be in the school when the dog is not working as part of the Child Certified Therapy Dog Team.

14. The Handler will respect the confidentiality of all information received regarding students or staff members while providing therapy dog services in the school. The Handler will not share or disclose any confidential or personal information that may be directly or indirectly disclosed to them.
15. The Principal of the school has the authority to end any arrangement pertaining to the use of therapy dogs at any time.

Responsibilities of the Principal:

The Principal of the School must ensure the following:

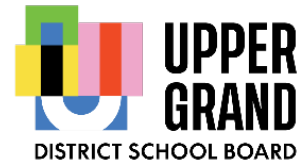
1. A letter has been sent home to the students in any of the classes where the therapy dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, extreme phobias, or religious considerations from the students and/or parents/guardians. A sample letter to be sent home with students is attached in Appendix D.
2. The Handler has provided in writing to the Principal a detailed schedule outlining the location, times and details of when and how the dog will be used in the school.
3. The Handler has provided the Principal with an up-to-date vaccination certificate for the dog, and proof that the Therapy Dog Team is certified to work with children.
4. The Handler has provided proof of insurance for themselves and the therapy dog.
5. The Handler has provided a current police record check with vulnerable sector screening.
6. The Principal has met with the Handler to discuss the expectations of the dog's grooming, hygiene, behaviour and role in the school. In conjunction with the Handler, the Principal must ensure that the personal care and physical needs of the therapy dog are met including plans for the:
  - safest and most environmentally sound place for the therapy dog to relieve itself;
  - removal and disposal of animal waste; and
  - provision of a suitable container for waste that the dog Handler can access.

If an elimination accident should occur, the custodian will be consulted on the proper

cleaning materials for the Handler to use.

7. Careful consideration has been given to which students will work with the therapy dog.
8. Parental consent forms are required for situations such as when the therapy dog will be working in a class or has a scheduled visit with an individual student(s). Parental consent will be provided in the form attached as Appendix A. The school will retain the signed forms, and copies are available to the therapy dog organizations, if required, subject to the therapy dog organization signing the UGDSB's Confidentiality Agreement (available on UGShare).
9. Arrangements have been made to inform the school community of the presence of the therapy dog (sample letter attached in Appendix D).
10. The Principal will immediately inform the appropriate Superintendent of Education and therapy dog organization of any incident of injury of any kind that involves the therapy dog and/or the Handler. An OSBIE incident report is to be submitted for incidents involving anyone except UGDSB staff. Staff incidents are to be reported to Health and Safety.
11. A timetable has been established by the Handler to take into consideration appropriate break and rest periods for the dog.
12. Arrangements have been made for the Handler to educate the staff and students on the role of the therapy dog, and to outline the rules of conduct concerning the dog.
13. A sign has been placed on each entry door of the school, which informs visitors of the presence of the therapy dog (see Appendix E).

**Therapy Dogs in Schools Protocol  
P.13 Appendix A**



**THERAPY DOGS IN SCHOOLS – INFORMED CONSENT**

**P.13-1**

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

Therapy Dog Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

The Upper Grand District School Board has partnered with the therapy dog organization named above to provide a certified dog therapy team to visit your child's school.

The following service will be offered at your child's school:

- Children will be reading one-on-one to a dog therapy team to practice reading skills.
- Group visitation will occur with one or more dog therapy teams.
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Start Date of Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency of Activity (single visit, weekly, school year, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

-----  
*Please complete below and return to school.*

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND CONSENT**

I understand that the Handlers and dogs involved in this program are members of a therapy dog organization that have been certified as Child Certified Therapy Dog Teams. Guidelines are in place for the safety of the participants as well as the safety of the teams performing the visits.

While every possible precaution is taken, accidents can and do happen, and occur without the fault of the participant, the school, the Upper Grand District School Board, and/or the certified teams. By choosing to take part in this program, you are accepting the risk that you/your child may be injured. The chance of injuries or incident can be reduced by carefully following instructions at all times while engaged in visits.

**I consent to my / my child's participation in this program.**

Student Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

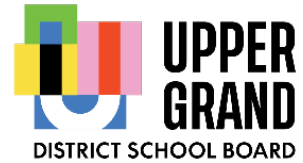
Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student (if 18 years of age or over): \_\_\_\_\_

*The personal information provided on this form is collected by the Upper Grand District School Board (the "Board") under the authority of the Education Act (R.S.O. 1990 c E2) including but not limited to sections 169.1-173. The information will be used for the Board's Therapy Dogs in Schools Protocol and securely stored and retained in accordance with the Board's Records Management Policy. This consent may be shared with persons outside the Board as confirmation that consent has been provided. Questions about this collection should be directed to the Principal.  
Retention: School to retain 1 year from the expiry of the program. Retain indefinitely if injury has occurred.*

# Therapy Dogs in Schools Protocol

## P.13 Appendix B



### Therapy Dogs in Schools Agreement

P13-2

#### Between

The Upper Grand District School Board,

c/o \_\_\_\_\_

School Name

(herein after referred to as "UGDSB")

#### And

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Handler Name, Address and Telephone Number  
(herein after referred to as the "Handler")

This partnership is a mutually-supportive, reciprocal agreement between UGDSB as represented by the Principal and (Name of Handler) to provide therapy dog services as a representative of (Name of therapy dog organization).

**Nature of Service:** Therapy dogs are interactive dogs trained to work for a Handler to provide service and comfort to people. The presence of a therapy dog can decrease anxiety and provide a level of comfort that enables students to work through a variety of challenging issues.

**Child Certified Therapy Dog Team** This refers to a Handler and dog team that have successfully passed the tests and monitored visits necessary to be certified to work with children as well as adults. In Ontario, this certification can only be granted by a recognized therapy dog organization.

**School Community:** This refers to students, parents, volunteers, school council, union representatives, and all employees of UGDSB.

**The Handler:** This term refers to the adult dog handler that was part of the certification process for a particular dog. All therapy dogs must be accompanied at all times by its adult dog handler.

**Duration of Service** (schedule of visits): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The Principal may terminate this agreement for any reason. During the period that this agreement is in effect, the following responsibilities are agreed upon.

### **The Handler**

1. In addition to student safety, the Handler agrees that the therapy dog's physical and mental health will be their priority.
2. The Handler will ensure that the Principal is provided with evidence that the Therapy Dog Team is certified to work with children.
3. The Handler will provide a police record check with vulnerable sector screening (VSS). **At no time will the Handler and dog be alone with students.**
4. The Handler will respect the confidentiality of all information received regarding students or staff members while providing therapy dog services in the school. The Handler will not share or disclose any confidential or personal information that may be directly or indirectly disclosed to them.
5. The Handler will ensure that the Principal always has an up-to-date vaccination certificate for the dog, which includes proof of vaccinations for rabies, distemper, parvovirus and hepatitis.
6. The Handler will provide to the Principal evidence of \$2 million general liability insurance through their respective therapy dog organization. If the organization's liability coverage does not extend to its Handlers and dogs, the Handler will provide evidence of \$2 million general liability coverage for themselves and the dog. The Handler acknowledges that the UGDSB does not carry liability and/or medical insurance for the Handler or dog and is not responsible if the dog is lost or stolen.
7. The Handler will provide the Principal with a copy of the Child Certified Therapy Dog Team's schedule of school visits.
8. The dog will always be under the direct control and supervision of the Handler. The Handler will be aware of the dog's behaviour at all times. If any changes in behaviour occur that may affect the safety of the children, the Handler will



- immediately remove the dog from the school and notify the Principal and the therapy dog organization.
9. The Handler will wear at all times, while representing their organization, an approved visiting Team Shirt and the therapy dog must wear its dog vest. The Handler's attention must be dedicated to the dog and their interactions with students and staff.
  10. The Handler will ensure that the dog is always on a 6-foot leash held by the Handler, with a flat buckle collar or approved harness, inside and outside the school. The Handler shall assume full responsibility and liability for any damage to school property or injury to UGDSB staff, students or others caused by the therapy dog while on school property.
  11. The Handler will be solely responsible for the supervision and humane care of the therapy dog, including any feeding, exercising and cleaning up after the therapy dog while the therapy dog is on school property. The Handler will ensure that the therapy dog while on school property is clean, well-groomed, house broken, free of injury or illness, and of the temperament appropriate for working with children and others in the schools.
  12. The Handler will take responsibility for educating staff, students, and the community on the role of the dog.
  13. The Handler will immediately inform the Principal of any incident of injury of any kind that involves the therapy dog and/or the Handler.
  14. If the Handler is a UGDSB employee, the following guidelines will **also** apply:
    - 14.1 The Handler can only be working in this capacity during times that they are not performing their regular duties as employees of the UGDSB. For teaching staff, this could include, with the Principal's permission, time prior to the beginning of the school day, lunch hour (if not performing duties related to supervision, APA's etc.), planning time, or after school. **The staff member cannot at any time assume the role of Handler when responsible for the care and supervision of students.** A detailed schedule must be approved by the Principal and communicated to staff. The Principal must be informed in advance of any changes to the schedule.
    - 14.2 The therapy dog is not to be in the school when the dog is not working as part of the Child Certified Therapy Dog Team.

15. The Principal of the school has the authority to end any arrangement pertaining to the use of therapy dogs at any time.

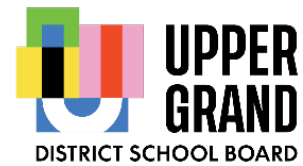
**The School**

1. The Principal has obtained written informed consent (P13-1) from the parent or guardian of all students who will be interacting with the therapy dog as part of the identified therapy dog program.
2. The Principal monitors the service provision and provides support or advice as appropriate, if required.
3. When applicable, school staff will cooperate with the Handler to evaluate the effectiveness of services provided.

_____	_____
Administrator	The Handler
_____	_____
Date	Date

# Therapy Dogs in Schools Protocol

## P.13 Appendix C– Principal’s Checklist



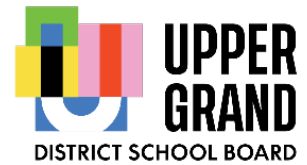
### PRINCIPAL’S CHECKLIST

- The Principal has consulted with their Superintendent of Education and the Superintendent of Program prior to granting permission for therapy dog services in the school.
- Prior to signing any agreement originating from the therapy dog organization, a thorough review has been done to ensure it conforms to the Therapy Dogs in Schools Protocol and UGDSB policies (refer to the Contract Signing Memo in UGshare)
- The Principal has received the following documentation from the Handler:
  - proof that the Therapy Dog Team is certified to work with children
  - a detailed schedule outlining the location, times and details of when and how the dog will be used in the school (includes a timetable with built-in break and rest periods for the dog)
  - proof of \$2 million liability insurance for both themselves and the dog (to be forwarded to the Risk Management Dept. at the board office)
  - an up-to-date vaccination certificate for the dog
  - a current police record check with vulnerable sector screening
  - a completed (signed and dated) Therapy Dogs in Schools Agreement (P13-2) (retained in the office).
- A letter has been sent home to the students in any of the classes where the therapy dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, extreme phobias, or religious considerations from the students and/or parents or guardians.
- A completed (signed and dated) Therapy Dogs in Schools – Informed Consent form (P13-1) is completed for each student who will be working with the therapy dog, either in a class setting or one-on-one. These forms are to be retained in the office.
- Arrangements have been made to educate the staff and students on the role of the therapy dog, and to outline the rules of interaction with the dog.

- 
- Arrangements have been made for the therapy dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site.
  
  - The Principal has communicated with the school community to ensure that it knows that a therapy dog will be present in the school at specified locations and times and has addressed any concerns raised.
    - A sign has been placed on each entry door of the school which informs visitors of the presence of the therapy dog (see Appendix E)

# Therapy Dogs in Schools Protocol

## P.13 Appendix D – Sample Letters



### SAMPLE LETTER TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

#### (SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that, effective (date), there will be a therapy dog in our school. The dog will be in the school (times/days). Dates and times may change as required without further notice.

Therapy dogs are interactive dogs trained to work for a Handler to provide service and comfort to people. The presence of a therapy dog can decrease anxiety and provide a level of comfort that enables students to work through a variety of challenging issues.

(Name of dog) is a highly trained and fully certified therapy dog, and we are thrilled to have (him/her) become a member of our school community. If you have any questions about (name of dog), please feel free to contact me.

There will be information sessions at the school to integrate (name of dog) into our daily routines and all of our staff and students will be instructed as to the proper procedures regarding the therapy dog.

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the therapy dog in the school, please contact me.

Thank you for your understanding, support, and interest.

Sincerely,

Principal

cc: Superintendent of Education

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**SAMPLE LETTER TO THE FAMILIES OF CHILDREN IN THE CLASS(ES)**  
**(SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)**

Date

Dear Parent / Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that, effective (date), there will be a therapy dog in our school assisting our students, and the therapy dog will be present in your child's class.

Therapy dogs are interactive dogs trained to work for a Handler to provide service and comfort to people. The presence of a therapy dog can decrease anxiety and provide a level of comfort that enables students to work through a variety of challenging issues.

(Name of dog) is a highly trained and fully certified therapy dog, and we are thrilled to have (him/her) become a member of our school community. If you have any questions about (name of dog) please feel free to contact me.

There will be information sessions at the school to integrate (name of dog) into our daily routines and all of our staff and students will be instructed as to the proper procedures regarding the therapy dog.

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the therapy dog in your child's class, please contact me.

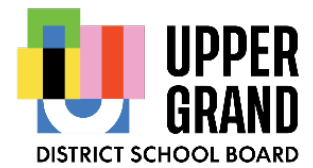
Thank you for your understanding, support, and interest.

Sincerely,

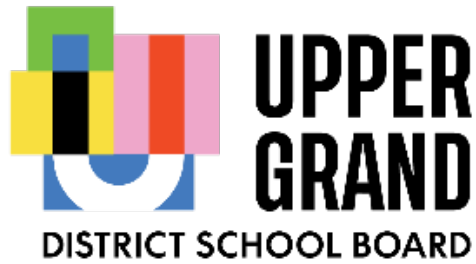
Principal

cc: Superintendent of Education

**Therapy Dogs in Schools Protocol  
P.13 Appendix E – Sample Sign**



**SAMPLE SIGN TO BE POSTED ON EACH ENTRY DOOR TO THE SCHOOL  
IS AVAILABLE ON THE NEXT PAGE**



# NOTICE:

There is a working  
**THERAPY DOG** in this  
school today.

