



Policy Name:	Therapy Dog Policy		
Associated Form(s):	Approval Form (attached) Student Complaint Form	Policy Number:	2026-12
Reviewed:	Non-Academic Policy Review Committee	Approved:	August 18, 2026
Approval Authority:	President <i>Susan Parish</i>	Adopted:	August 24, 2026
Responsible Executive(s):	Vice President of Human Resources	Revised:	N/A
Responsible Office(s):	Human Resources	Contact(s):	Vice President of Human Resources

I. Purpose

This Policy establishes requirements for the approval, presence, and use of therapy dogs in University programs, facilities, and activities. The Policy is intended for when the University brings therapy dogs to campus, particularly during times of high stress for students and employees, and is intended to promote the health, safety, and well-being of students, employees, visitors, handlers, and animals while supporting appropriate therapeutic, educational, wellness, and community engagement activities.

II. Scope

This Policy applies to all therapy dog visits, programs, and activities sponsored, hosted, or approved by the University, whether occurring on University property or in connection with a University program. This Policy does not govern service animals, emotional support animals, pets, or animals used for research or instructional purposes unless expressly stated by the University.

III. Definitions

- **Therapy dog** means a dog that has been evaluated, trained, and registered through a recognized therapy dog organization and that together with its handler, provides comfort, support, or therapeutic interaction in approved settings. A therapy dog is not a service animal and does not have the access rights of a service animal.
- **Handler** means the individual responsible for the therapy dog at all times during a University-approved visit, program, or activity.
- **Recognized therapy dog organization** means an organization that evaluates, registers, and maintains standards for therapy dog teams consistent with applicable law, health and safety practices, and the principles reflected in New York State guidance for handlers and facilities using therapy dogs.

IV. Approval Requirements

Departments may request therapy dogs may be present in University facilities or activities via prior written approval from the Office of Human Resources. Requests must identify the sponsoring department or unit, the purpose of the visit, the date, time, location, anticipated audience, handler information, therapy dog registration information, and any special circumstances relevant to health, safety, accessibility, or operations.

V. Eligibility and Registration Standards

To participate in University-approved therapy dog activities, the dog must have an appropriate temperament, demonstrate basic obedience skills, be licensed as required by New York law, and

be registered with a recognized therapy dog organization unless otherwise approved by the Office of the Human Resources, in consultation with the Office of the General Counsel. The handler must provide current documentation of registration or certification upon request.

VI. Health and Grooming Requirements

Therapy dogs must be in good health and suitable for participation at the time of each visit. The handler must maintain documentation showing an annual veterinary health screening, current vaccination history including rabies vaccination, and negative fecal parasite testing. The dog must be clean, well-groomed, and free from signs of illness, including vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, lethargy, open wounds, superficial infections, stitches, or staples.

Therapy dogs may not participate if they are receiving antibiotics, immunosuppressive drugs, or antifungal medications, if an intact female dog is in season or nursing young, or if other animals in the dog's household are showing evidence of upper respiratory or gastrointestinal illness. Dogs may not be fed a raw protein diet or raw treats in connection with University therapy dog activities due to increased risk of infectious agent transmission.

VII. Handler Responsibilities

The handler is responsible for the therapy dog at all times and must maintain control of the dog through a leash, harness, carrier, or other appropriate means unless a different arrangement is specifically approved. The handler must follow University directions, respect participant boundaries, prevent disruptive behavior, and immediately remove the dog if the dog appears stressed, ill, aggressive, overly tired, or otherwise unable to participate safely.

The handler must ensure that the dog does not jump on individuals, lick open skin or wounds, eat from University surfaces, enter restricted areas, or interact with individuals who do not wish to participate. The handler must promptly clean up and properly dispose of animal waste and must report any incident, injury, bite, scratch, allergic reaction, illness concern, property damage, or unsafe condition to the sponsoring department and the designated University office.

VIII. Facility and Program Requirements

University departments or units sponsoring therapy dog activities must ensure that visits occur only in approved locations and are planned to minimize risks related to allergies, phobias, sanitation, crowding, accessibility, and disruption to University operations. Sponsors must provide appropriate notice when feasible, identify an on-site point of contact, maintain any required documentation, and ensure that participants have the choice whether to interact with the therapy dog.

Therapy dogs are not permitted in laboratories, food preparation areas, clinical or health care treatment areas, mechanical rooms, animal care areas, or other locations restricted by law, health

and safety requirements, or University policy, unless specifically approved by the University based on the nature of the program and applicable safeguards.

IX. Documentation

Before approval, the handler or sponsoring department must provide documentation requested by the University, which may include proof of dog licensing, therapy dog organization registration, annual veterinary health screening, vaccination history, fecal parasite testing, handler training, and evidence of insurance coverage if required. The University may deny, suspend, or revoke approval if documentation is incomplete, expired, inconsistent with this Policy, or otherwise insufficient to establish suitability for participation.

X. Participant Health, Safety, and Consent

Participation in therapy-dog activities must be voluntary. Individuals may decline contact with a therapy dog for any reason. Sponsors and handlers must take reasonable steps to protect individuals with allergies, animal-related fears, cultural or religious concerns, or other needs. Hand hygiene should be encouraged before and after direct interaction with the therapy dog, and contact should be limited or discontinued if a health or safety concern arises. If an employee has a concern about this Policy or a dog on campus, they may speak with the Office of Human Resources. If a student has a concern about this Policy or a dog on campus, they may speak with the Dean of Students or file a complaint via the Student Complaint Form.

XI. Incident Reporting and Removal

Any bite, scratch, injury, allergic reaction, illness concern, property damage, aggressive behavior, loss of control, or other incident involving a therapy dog must be reported promptly to the Vice President of Human Resources or Campus Safety. The University may require immediate removal of the dog, suspend future participation, require additional documentation, or impose other conditions to address safety, compliance, or operational concerns.

XII. Relationship to Other Policies and Laws

This Policy must be applied consistently with applicable federal, state, and local law and University policies, including policies concerning disability accommodations, campus safety, facilities use, health and sanitation, and conduct. Nothing in this Policy limits the rights of individuals with disabilities who use service animals as defined by applicable law.

XIII. Policy Administration and Review

The University has designated the Office of Human Resources as the office/official responsible for administering this Policy, maintaining approval records, and reviewing therapy dog activities. This Policy should be reviewed periodically and updated as needed to reflect changes in law, [public health guidance](#), University operations, and recognized therapy dog standards.

Therapy Dog Campus Approval Form

This form must be completed and approved before any therapy dog visit, program, or activity occurs on campus or in connection with a University-sponsored activity.

Sponsoring Department/Unit	
Program/Event Name	
Date, Time, and Location	
Purpose of Visit	
Estimated Number of Participants	

Therapy Dog and Handler Information

Handler Name	
Handler Phone/Email	
Dog Name, Breed, and Age	
Therapy Dog Organization	
Registration/Certification Expiration Date	

Required Documentation

Attach or confirm receipt of the following before approval:

- Proof of current therapy dog registration or certification.
- Proof of current dog license, if applicable.
- Current rabies vaccination and vaccination history.
- Annual veterinary health screening.
- Negative fecal parasite testing, if required by the University.
- Evidence of insurance coverage, if required.

Sponsor and Handler Acknowledgments

- The therapy dog visit will occur only in the approved location, date, and time.
- The handler will maintain control of the dog at all times and remove the dog if safety, health, or behavioral concerns arise.
- Participants may choose whether to interact with the therapy dog.
- The sponsor will consider allergies, phobias, accessibility, sanitation, crowding, and operational needs.
- Any bite, scratch, injury, allergic reaction, illness concern, property damage, or unsafe condition will be reported promptly under University procedures.

Approval

Approved	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Approved with Conditions
Conditions or Restrictions	
Approving Office/Official	
Signature and Date	