

**Prince William Public Libraries
Library Policies**

Animal Therapy Policy

Reviewed by the Prince William County Attorney's Office June 13, 2024

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Animal Therapy Policy

Prince William Public Libraries (PWPL) staff shall offer programs to the public, in and out of the library buildings, to promote the library and its services and to advance PWPL's vision and mission. Programs should align with PWPL's Strategic Plan, be equitable, and not be chosen based on personal beliefs or political views.

To ensure that all participants, both staff and public, are safe in programming that involves animals, PWPL adheres to the following standards as outlined by Prince William County government (County):

CERTIFICATIONS, TRAINING, AND HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Handlers:

All handlers must be PWPL approved vendors.

License and Tags:

All therapy animals must meet local, county, and/or state license or permit regulations and have an owner identification tag.

Health:

All therapy animals must comply with local, county, and/or state vaccination and health requirements, which may include distemper, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza, and Bordetella. A copy of the animal's immunization records must be included in the proposed Therapy Animal Policy packet and maintained by PWPL and available on-site at any animal therapy event or interaction.

Proof of proper training and certification of the K-9 therapy animal and handler from a recognized and respected certifying authority must be included in the MOU maintained by PWPL.

INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

Any vendor or volunteer organization approved to facilitate interactions between therapy animals and specified individuals at Library-sponsored events, whether regularly or on special occasions, must provide a commercial general liability certificate of insurance for the handler and therapy animal, with coverage of at least \$1,000,000 per occurrence and "Prince William County Government" named as an additional insured. The vendor must update and provide certificates with their vendor MOU, and PWPL will maintain current paperwork with the Programming Office.

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For events where the public will interact with therapy animals, PWPL staff will help the vendor manage and administer participant waiver forms and PWPL will maintain records for one year with the Programming Office.

EVENT/INTERACTION REQUIREMENTS

1. **Supervision:** A PWPL employee must be designated to manage and actively monitor the event and interactions.
2. **Specified Area:** Therapy Animal interactions must be limited to a specific, defined space that includes signage identifying the activity taking place. The setup must allow personnel who do not wish to participate to easily avoid the area without disrupting their work or workspace.
3. **Identification:** K-9 therapy animals and handlers must wear a harness, vest, cape, identification tag, or other gear that readily identifies their status.
4. **Control:** The handler must be in full control of the therapy animal at all times. The care and supervision of a therapy animal is solely the responsibility of its handler.
5. **Leash:** Except when crated, the K-9 therapy animal must be on a leash at all times. The only exception is for animals trained to perform preapproved tricks and stunts as part of their program.
6. **Clean-up Rule:** The handler must:
 - a. Always carry equipment sufficient to clean up the animal's urine and feces.
 - b. Never allow the animal to urinate or defecate on any property, public or private, unless the handler immediately removes the waste.
 - c. Be responsible for properly disposing of the animal's feces and for any damage caused by the waste or its removal.
 - d. Crates and cages must be clean and odor-free.
7. **Disruption:** The handler must immediately remove a therapy animal that is unruly or disruptive from library facilities upon request from the designated Supervisor.
8. **Food and Water Areas:** Food and water areas must be provided and kept clean. Food must be properly stored.
9. **Incident Reporting:** The supervising employee or Public Safety Volunteer is required to immediately report any incidents involving therapy animals and/or handlers to County Risk & Wellness Services.

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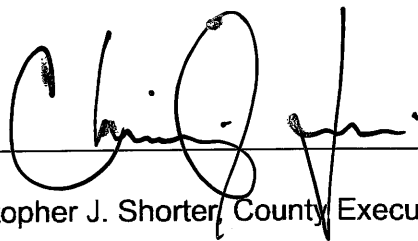
OPTION TO OPT OUT OF THE EVENT

For personal, cultural, and/or medical reasons, some PWPL staff may choose not to interact with therapy animals, and the staff's supervisor must take steps to respect that choice. Staff may notify their supervisor ahead of the event time to request to opt out of the event. PWPL prohibits retaliation against any employee who opts out of therapy animal events.

COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

All PWPL policies are available on the internal PWPL SharePoint page. This policy will also be available on the PWPL website and reviewed annually.

All vendors are required to sign a Program Agreement/MOU at least 30 days before the event.



Christopher J. Shorter, County Executive

Approved | Not Approved