



POLICY REGARDING THE ON-CAMPUS PRESENCE OF THERAPY ANIMALS / THERAPY DOGS

I. POLICY STATEMENT

Oklahoma City University recognizes that, in times of stress, students as well as University employees may benefit from interaction with an animal that has been specifically trained as a “therapy animal.” This policy provides for the manner in which the occasional presence of a therapy animal on campus may be approved by appropriate University administrators.

II. DEFINITION

Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT): AAT is a type of therapy that involves animals as a form of treatment. The goal of AAT is to improve a patient’s or client’s social, emotional, or cognitive functioning.

Therapy Animal: A therapy animal is an animal that provides affection and comfort and is specifically trained to be gentle and stable in stressful situations. Therapy animals are most often used in hospitals, nursing homes, mental health facilities, schools, and children’s settings. The use of a therapy animal may be incorporated into the treatment process as prescribed by an appropriate health care professional. A therapy animal is not considered a service animal or an assistance animal.

See the Policies section of the University’s website for policies concerning the presence of other animals on campus: <http://www.okcu.edu/policies/>

III. REQUIREMENT OF CERTIFICATION FOR THERAPY ANIMALS TO BE PERMITTED ON CAMPUS

Before a therapy animal will be allowed to be on the University campus, the animal must be certified by a formal Animal-Assisted Therapy organization recognized in the State of Oklahoma, such as Pet Partners (formerly Delta Society), Therapy Dogs International, Inc. (TDI), and Human Animal Link of Oklahoma Foundation (H.A.L.O.). In limited circumstances, University administrators may approve the presence on campus of therapy animals in training.

IV. APPROVAL PROCESS FOR ON-CAMPUS VISITS BY THERAPY ANIMALS

A. Recurring visits

With approval of the appropriate dean (if the visit is in an academic setting) as well as the University cabinet, a University employee who has received training and certification as an AAT handler may schedule specific hours for his or her therapy animal to be on campus and available to students or employees who wish to interact with the animal. In order for such recurring visits to be approved, the University employee must submit a written request for approval to his or her dean or vice president in sufficient time so that the dean or vice president may submit the request for approval to the University cabinet at least two weeks prior to the commencement of recurring visits. The written request for approval must meet, at a minimum, the following criteria:

1. The hours during which the therapy animal will be on campus must be described in detail. Those hours must be limited, at most, to two days per week and two hours per day.
2. The manner in which the animal will be supervised while on campus must be described in detail. Unless the therapy animal is confined to a crate when not interacting with a student or employee, the employee/handler must devote substantially all of his or her time during the visit to supervision of the animal, and the University employee must describe how he or she will accomplish assigned University responsibilities while supervising the animal. (When not in a crate, the therapy animal should be on a leash at all times.)
3. The location of the recurring visits must be specified. The therapy animal should be made available for visits in an area that is easy for those who do not wish to interact with the animal to avoid such contact. The area may be public (such as an area of campus lawn or an area in the McDaniel Student Center) or private (such as a private office), but such an area should not be office space shared with others (such as a shared office or an office suite). Therapy animals shall not be in food preparation or service areas.

The University cabinet has the discretion to approve or disapprove a request, whether or not the criteria listed above are met. The decision of the University cabinet is final.

B. Limited or special occasion visits

A University employee, or an external group recommended by a University employee, may seek approval for a therapy animal to visit campus on a limited basis for special occasions such as mid-term examinations, final examinations, national testing dates, or other specified occasions. A University employee or external sponsor must provide a written proposal for the therapy animal's visit to the Vice President for Student Affairs, who in turn will refer the proposal to the University cabinet for consideration. The written proposal must be submitted to the Vice President for Student Affairs in sufficient time so that the vice president may submit the proposal to the University cabinet at least two weeks prior to the proposed presence of the animal on campus. In order for limited visits by therapy animals to be approved, the proposal must meet, at a minimum, the following criteria:

1. The proposal must specify the reason (e.g., the special occasion) for the therapy animal to be on campus.

2. The proposal must specify the hours during which the therapy animal will be on campus and the identity of the certified handler who will be with the animal at all times while the animal is on campus.
3. The proposal must describe how the University community will be notified of the upcoming presence of the therapy animal on campus.
4. The manner in which the animal will be supervised while on campus must be described in detail. Unless the therapy animal is confined to a crate when not interacting with a student or employee, the employee or other specified handler must devote substantially all of his or her time during the visit to supervision of the animal. When not in a crate, the therapy animal should be on a leash at all times.
5. The proposal must specify on-campus the location of the therapy animal's visit. The therapy animal should be made available for visits in an area that is easy for those who do not wish to interact with the animal to avoid such contact. The area may be public (such as an area of campus lawn or an area in the McDaniel Student Center) or private (such as a private office), but such an area should not be office space shared with others (such as a shared office or an office suite). Therapy animals shall not be in food preparation or service areas.

The University cabinet has the discretion to approve or disapprove a proposal, whether or not the criteria listed above are met. The decision of the University cabinet is final.

V. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THERAPY ANIMALS AND THEIR HANDLERS

- A. Identification:** It is required that the therapy animal wear a harness, cape, identification tag or other gear that readily identifies its status.
- B. 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.
- C. Leash:** Except when crated, the therapy animal must be on a leash at all times. Exceptions will not be made.
- D. License and Tags:** All therapy animals must meet local, county, and/or state license or permit regulations. It is required that therapy animals have an owner identification tag.
- E. Health:** All therapy animals must comply with local, county, and/or state vaccination and health requirements, which may include distemper, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza, and Bordatella. A copy of immunization records must be submitted with a proposal for the animal to be on campus. Animals must have an annual clean bill of health from a licensed veterinarian, including current vaccinations and immunizations against diseases common to that type of animal. Therapy animals must be pest- and parasite-free (i.e., not infested with fleas or ticks).
- F. Clean-up Rule:** The handler must (a) always carry equipment sufficient to clean up the animal's feces (b) never allow the animal to defecate on any property, university, public or private (except the partner's own property), unless the handler immediately removes the waste; and (c) be responsible for the proper disposal of the animal's feces and for any damage caused by the waste or its removal. Crates and cages must be clean and odor-free.

G. Disruption: The handler of a therapy animal that is unruly or disruptive may be asked to remove the animal from University facilities.

H. Food and water areas: Food and water areas must be kept clean, and food must be stored properly.

VI. INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS

Any person who is approved to bring therapy animals onto campus property, whether on a recurring basis or on special occasions, must provide a commercial general liability certificate of insurance for the handler and therapy animal, with coverage of no less than \$100,000 per occurrence, and with the University named as an additional insured.