

## **Animals in Schools**

While animals can provide educational opportunities and companionship, bringing them into a school setting presents significant challenges. We do not recommend allowing staff to bring personal animals to school due to the substantial risks involved. These include liability issues in the event of bites, allergies, or injuries; health and safety concerns for students and staff, particularly those with allergies or phobias; and operational disruptions that can arise from unanticipated animal behavior, distractions in the classroom, and the need for additional supervision. Schools should maintain a firm stance on this policy, with limited exceptions for educational purposes under proper controls (such as science programs and supervised animal visits) and for service animals as defined by the ADA or approved emotional support or therapy animals, provided they comply with all applicable laws and school policies.

### **1. Liability and Insurance Coverage**

- It's important to note that liability concerns arise when animals are brought onto school property.
- If the animal causes injury (bites, kicks, scratches) or damages property, the school may be held liable.
- Schools are generally not designed to accommodate animals, increasing the risk of incidents.

### **2. Health and Safety Concerns**

- *Zoonotic Disease Transmission:* Animals can carry bacteria such as E. coli, Salmonella, and Cryptosporidium, which can pose health risks to students and staff, particularly those with compromised immune systems.
- *Allergies and Sensitivities:* Some individuals may have allergies to animal dander, hair, or hay that may be carried with the animal.
- *Sanitation Issues:* Animals can defecate unexpectedly, creating sanitation concerns, potential contamination of food areas, and increased maintenance burdens.

### **3. Disruptions to the Educational Environment**

- Schools are not agricultural facilities, and you may not be fully prepared or resourced to handle animals.
- Managing the animal's needs (feeding, bathroom needs, behavior) could interfere with the staff member's primary job responsibilities and set a concerning precedent for non-work-related accommodations.
- If an exception is made, other staff or students may request to bring pets or livestock for various personal reasons, making it difficult to enforce consistent policies.

### **4. Precedent for Future Requests**

- Allowing this request opens the door for future staff or students to bring other animals under similar justifications.
- The school would need to establish clear guidelines on what is and is not acceptable, which could lead to difficult decisions and enforcement challenges.
- Schools should maintain a firm stance on animals on campus, reserving exceptions for educational purposes with proper controls (science programs, supervised animal visits, service animals).

For these reasons, we do not recommend allowing animals on school premises. The risks related to liability, health and safety, disruptions, and policy consistency outweigh the personal accommodation request. Consistently applying a no-animal policy is the best course of action to protect student and staff safety.