



Animals at Work Policy Saplings Nature School September 2024

Rationale

Animals can help to create a fun, happy environment, encourage interactions among people, and provide important social-emotional contact for children and staff. Animals are also a responsibility, and the opportunity to have them at our workplace must never interfere with or take precedence over the care of any children in our charge. The purpose of this policy is to set out rules around bringing animals into the workplace and to mitigate the associated risks. Certified Support Animals, or those in training are not subject to this policy.

Policy

This policy applies to employees. Because it would be too difficult to ensure responsible ownership and support of animals, students are not permitted to bring animals to our workplace, other than Certified Support Animals.

Subject to the administrative procedures set out in this policy, animals may be brought into a program for two reasons:

- (1) instructional purposes meaning that the presence of animals directly supports the learning strategies or the achievement of the objectives of an approved educational program;
- (2) social-emotional support meaning that the interaction with the animal has the effect of alleviating worry, providing comfort, and/or mitigating against feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Under no circumstances shall animals that pose actual or potential safety risks and/or health risks to students and/or employees be allowed to attend any of the programs.

Employees who are in the role of being directly responsible for the health, safety, instruction, and/or well-being of the children in their care, including those designated as ECE, ECE-A, EA, Certified Teacher, and Forest Educator may not bring in animals during their shifts.

Procedures

This policy applies to all Saplings' locations, including Before and After School Care Programs, Preschool and Toddler Programs, and the Nature School.

The focus of our policy is dogs and cats. Other pets are not included at this time. Please contact the Program Director and/or Head of School if you would like to explore adding other pet types to the workplace pet policy.

1. The Program Director and/or Head of School must provide pre-approval to have the animals brought into any programs for instructional and/or social/emotional purposes. Once approved, participating pets are allowed any time their owner/sponsor is at work.
2. Prior to allowing animals into the program, steps are to be taken to ensure that students and employees are not allergic to the presence of these animals, that the animals will present no physical danger to students or employees, and that the animals are free from any disease or parasite.

3. Prior to introducing any animals into a program and using animals as part of the educational program, educators shall make all efforts to ensure that students receive instruction in the proper care and handling of animals.
4. When animals are allowed in a program, they shall be housed in suitable, sanitary, self-contained enclosures appropriate to the size of the animal. Animals shall not be allowed to roam freely in any area of the program.
5. Sponsors of the animals must ensure that enclosures are kept in a sanitary condition and that waste is properly sealed for disposal.

Pet Requirements

In order to be eligible to be present at a program, animals must be:

- At least 3 months old.
- Up to date on required vaccinations.
- Free of any communicable infections or any parasites such as fleas.
- Clean and well groomed.
- House-trained.
- Obedient, well-socialized and with no history of biting, excessive barking, chasing or aggressive behavior.
- Microchipped, to help locate and return them in case they would run away while visiting.

Owner Responsibilities

To comply with our workplace animal policy, owners/sponsors who want to bring their pets to work must agree to:

- Be 100% responsible for their animal's behavior, well-being, hygiene and happiness the entire time they are onsite.
- Be respectful of other employees to ensure everyone can be as successful and productive as possible at work.
- Manage their workspace to ensure it is "pet-proofed" and safe for their visiting animal.
- Keep their animal with them and controlled throughout the day. Or, make arrangements with a colleague to do so if they need to step away.
- Ensure that their animal's behavior does not interfere with other employees' comfort or ability to do their work.
- Provide their own animal items to ensure animal safety, such as leashes, crates or gates to keep the animal securely in the employee's work area.
- Provide their own animal wellness items, such as waste bags, toys, food, and water bowls.
- Provide adequate bathroom breaks, access to water and food, and exercise throughout the day.
- Clean up after their animal immediately if any accidents occur.
- Be legally and financially responsible for any damage caused by their animal.
- Provide annual proof of vaccination and health for their visiting pets.
- Keep pets out of pet-free areas.
- Use alternate care away from work on days when the employee would be unable to fully manage the animal at work (e.g., an all-day meeting) or when the animal is ill.
- Take their pet home at any time if the pet's behavior or health makes it a distraction, nuisance, or danger to anyone else, or if asked to do so by the Program Director.

Managing Issues

Concerns related to visiting animals or the Animals at Work policy should be handled in the following way:

- 1) Talk with the animal's owner/sponsor and work to resolve issues mutually.
- 2) If unresolved, take the issue to the Program Director.