

Croydon Community School & OPTIONS

Dogs for Life Policy



PURPOSE

To ensure that the staff and students of Croydon Community School comply with guidelines set out to safeguard the animal, students and staff, and practice responsible care for the animal, which will be used for therapeutic purposes within the school.

SCOPE

The benefits of animal-assisted therapy has been widely researched and documented. Animal-assisted therapy is a positive intervention for young students who present with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Research demonstrates a decrease of physical arousal and disruptive behaviours when accompanied by a therapeutic dog (Nagengast et al. 1997). In addition, Kruger & Serpell 2006, suggest that therapeutic animals in schools can serve as a:

- Transitional object of attachment
- Positive relationship and way to support other students to reach cognitive and therapeutic goals
- Opportunity to engage pro-socially with their environment
- Mechanism to develop positive behaviours and improve their social skills.

Maggie will be a permanent therapeutic dog at Croydon Community School. At present, Maggie will be available for students to visit in the Wellbeing Room and around the school grounds as per T's directions. Once trained, Maggie will be able to spend time independently (without T but still under the supervision of Advisors) within classrooms.

The implementation of animal assisted therapy at CCS will be via an organic process; structures and systems will be flexible to suit the needs of Maggie, the students and Advisory staff. Advisors are encouraged to notify T if they would like Maggie to spend time within their Advisory. The option to have animal assisted therapy time in the Advisory is at the complete discretion of the Advisor. Advisors are free to opt in/out at any time.

There are expectations for how Maggie will be treated, as well as her behaviour while she is within an Advisory. Maggie will be treated with care and respect. Students will be asked to leave Maggie on the floor and refrain from picking her up. As she grows, Maggie will progress through different developmental phases, therefore socialisation with the school community is important to create and maintain healthy attachment and relationships with staff and students.

POLICY

Croydon Community School must:

- Notify all parents, guardians and students that a therapeutic dog is being introduced, and provide appropriate resources and information
- Advise parents that they have the right to decline their child's involvement with the animal.
- Inform staff that a therapeutic animal will be on campus.
- Advise staff that they have the right to decline having the animal in their classroom.
- Spay the animal at the appropriate time, determined through consultation with the veterinary clinic.
- Vaccinate the animal and maintain records of yearly check-ups. A copy will be kept on campus, to be presented if an audit is ever requested.
- Establish a list of staff members who volunteer their time to be responsible for supervising and implementing the animal's routines while it is on Campus.
- Establish routines for when the dog will be given adequate time outside. A staff member will accompany the animal to a designated student free area, for the animal's use only. All biological

materials will be removed with disposable bags and disposed of in a hygienic manner. Appropriate hand hygiene will follow, to minimise the spread of infection.

- Have the animal on a lead in the school grounds.
- Provide a crate for the animal, and allow adequate rest breaks from school activities, in accordance with the RSPCA Crate Training Guidelines.
- Provide the animal with adequate food and water.
- Follow the Department of Education and Training's incident reporting procedures where an incident involving the animal occurs.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 s. 3(1), authorises a '*person in charge*' of the animal. This paid staff member will be Tahlia MacNab, Youth Worker, Croydon Community School. Tahlia MacNab will retain ownership of the animal.

The *Person in Charge* must:

- Provide an off campus residence for the animal to stay overnight.
- Provide safe transport to and from their residence. The animal will be secured with an appropriate harness or cage to ensure safe travel, in accordance with the VicRoads' Guidelines for Driving or Riding with Animals.
- Supply all food and medical provisions for the animal, and be responsible for all monetary costs associated with the animal, ensuring no costs fall to Croydon Community School.
- Register the animal within their local municipality, and provide a copy of these records to reside on campus.
- Provide behaviour training through the Dogs for Life program, allowing appropriate socialisation to occur.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

For further information the school will refer to the following Act:

- Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986

Related resources

- [Dogs for Life program](#)
- [RSPCA Dogs and Puppies](#)

Animal-Assisted Therapy Research

- [Animal-Assisted Interventions for Adolescents with Emotional and Behavioural Problems \(Research Report\) – AAT Research Report by Naomi Adams](#)
- [Animal-Assisted Interventions for Children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A Theoretical Review and Consideration of Future Research Directions](#)
- [The effects of the presence of a companion animal on physiological and behavioural distress in children during a physical examination – Journal of Paediatric Nursing, Nagengast et al 1997.](#)
- [Animal assisted interventions in mental health – Handbook on Animal-Assisted Therapy: Theoretical Foundations and Guidelines for Practice, Kruger & Serpell 2006.](#)

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy, first developed in this format in April, 2019 and will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle or if guidelines change.