

Purpose

To set forth procedures and criteria for dogs and other animals on Allegany County Public Schools (ACPS) property, in alignment with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related municipal and ACPS regulations.

Definitions

Animal Handler - is a professional who cares for, controls, and works with animals, ensuring their welfare, training them for specific tasks, and managing their daily needs in diverse environments like shelters or for service animal roles.

Emotional support animals - provide their handlers with companionship, relieve loneliness, and sometimes help relieve depression and certain phobias. Emotional support animals do not meet the requirements of the definition of a service animal.

Student Day - begins with the student's arrival and ends when the student's dismissal.

Therapy dogs - are not legally defined by federal law and do not have public access rights under the ADA. They provide therapeutic contact for people other than their handlers, and do not meet the requirements of the definition of a service animal.

Uncontrolled Animal – a domesticated animal not restrained by a leash, tether, or other physical restraint, allowing it to roam freely and not under the immediate control of a responsible handler or owner.

Policy Statement

The Board of Education is committed to maintaining a safe, healthy, and focused learning and working environment for all students and staff. In support of this commitment, animals are generally not permitted on ACPS property. Exceptions may be granted for service animals assisting individuals with disabilities in accordance with ADA guidelines and applicable Maryland law, as well as for specific, pre-approved educational, safety, or therapeutic purposes. All approved animals must be properly vaccinated, appropriately leashed or contained, and responsibly handled at all times. Owners are accountable for the care and control of their animals and are liable for any damages or injuries that may occur.

Related Policy and Regulation

ACPS Service Animals Policy IMG, Regulation IMG-R, and Exhibit IMG-E.

Legal Reference	Policy History	Adopted	Reviewed	Revised
28 CFR §35 Md. Code Ann., Human Services, §7-705.				March 10, 2026, 1 st Reading – Tabled June 16, 2026, 1 st Reading August 4, 2026, 2 nd Reading