

	HARRISONBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT General Orders	Policy Number: 710
	Chapter: Support Services	Total Pages: 4
	Section: Facility Support Dog	Issue Date: 01/25/2023
	Issued By: Kelley Warner, Chief of Police	Effective Date: 01/25/2023
	Replaces: All General Orders Previously Issued Relative to Subject	
VALEAC Standards:		

A. POLICY AND PURPOSE

This policy establishes guidelines for maintaining a facility support dog program. The Department will partner with a certified organization/vendor, approved by the Chief of Police, to diversify the overall wellness initiatives and programs that contribute to reducing workplace stress, anxiety, or trauma reactions from critical incidents.

B. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this policy. Responsibility rests with the supervisor to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated. This directive is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

C. DEFINITIONS

Facility Support Dog_ Trained support dog used to provide emotional comfort to assist with stress relief, traumatic experiences, anxiety to mitigate the onset of potential stress disorders, and also help with victims or witnesses of crimes.

Support Dog Handler (handler)_ Selected department member approved and responsible for providing overall care, ensuring appropriate training, and monitoring the dog's activities.

D. OVERVIEW

First responders witness and experience various types of traumatic events throughout their careers. These events can have a negative impact over time. Support dogs are crucial in assisting department members and others in reducing the long-term effects of trauma.

The support dog possesses unique capabilities and specific training to be utilized in peer support programs. This helps build resiliency to improve the emotional and mental wellness of the department members.

Victims and witnesses experience various types of traumatic events depending on the circumstances. Support dogs can be used to assist the case detective at their discretion.

E. ASSIGNMENT

The facility support dog is a secondary assignment to the primary function of the designated handler.

The care and maintenance of the facility support dog rests with the canine supervisor, independent of the division/bureau of the handler.

F. GUIDELINES FOR USE

- a. The facility support dog will be utilized as a companion animal to provide stress relief for department members; the dog will augment the peer support team for emotional support in response to trauma and other critical incidents.
- b. The facility support dog will have open access to interact with department members. Department members are encouraged and allowed to approach, pet, and interact with the support dog.
- c. The facility support dog will be available for forensic interviews with a child at the detective's discretion. The support dog handler may be present but only to handle the support dog.
- d. The facility support dog will be available for interviews involving victims or witnesses at the department or in the field at the discretion of the case detective.
- e. The facility support dog is subject to call out for critical incidents outside their regularly scheduled hours.
- f. The support dog handler will document all deployments and training to the canine supervisor.

G. HANDLER RESPONSIBILITIES

The facility support dog handler shall ultimately be responsible for the facility support dog's health and welfare and ensure that the facility support dog receives proper nutrition, grooming, training, medical care, affection, and living conditions.

- a. The facility support dog will live with the selected handler. The handler is required to provide a sanitary and stable home environment. The handler must reside in a house, townhouse, or apartment owned or leased in the handler's name. The residence must be adequate in size to accommodate the facility support dog, as determined by the department. If the residence is leased, the landlord must provide written permission to the department to allow the facility support dog to be housed there.

- b. In the event that a facility support dog is injured or there is an indication that the facility support dog is not in good physical condition, the injury or condition will be reported to the canine supervisor as soon as practicable and appropriately documented.
- c. All medical attention should be rendered by the designated canine veterinarian, except during an emergency where treatment should be obtained from the nearest available veterinarian or canine medic. All medical treatment records shall be maintained in the handler's personnel file and a copy given to the canine supervisor.
 - 1. Heartland Veterinary Clinic, 979 S High St, Harrisonburg, VA 22801 (540) 434-3903
 - a. Hours: Normal business hours
 - 2. Shenandoah Valley Regional Veterinary Emergency Service, 465 Lee Hwy, Verona, VA 24482 (540) 248-1051
 - a. After normal business hours
- d. Support dog handlers will not engage in ANY response driving or pursuits while transporting the facility support dog.
- e. Any changes in the living status of the handler that may affect the lodging or environment of the canine shall be reported to the canine supervisor immediately.
- f. Handlers shall permit the canine supervisor to conduct random on-site inspections of affected areas of their homes to verify that conditions and equipment conform to this policy.
- g. The handler shall maintain all department equipment under his/her control in a clean and serviceable condition.

H. REPORTING ACCIDENTAL BITES AND INJURIES

The following steps should be taken if an accidental bite or injury occurs:

- a. Secure the canine.
- b. Render medical aid to the injured person.
- c. Photograph injuries as soon as practicable after rendering aid.
- d. Notify the canine unit supervisor immediately for investigation; if unavailable, the on-duty supervisor shall investigate the incident.
- e. Document the incident in Blue Team and Tyler Mobile and forward it to the canine supervisor.
- f. The handler shall complete a memo and forward it through the chain of command.

I. EQUIPMENT PROVIDED

- a. Food and Water Bowl (home and facility)
- b. Collar
- c. Working harness
- d. Leash
- e. K9 Kennel/Crate

J. TRAINING

The facility support dog and handler shall be trained and certified to meet current recognized standards from the vendor.

To ensure that all training is consistent, no handler, trainer, or outside vendor is authorized to train to a standard that is not reviewed and approved by the department.