

Animals in the Classroom

DELC Regulation

414-300-0240

Policy

Classroom animals can enhance the learning experience. In helping to care for animals, children learn responsibility. Observations of animals help to develop an appreciation for nature, the environment and science. Children gain social skills as they learn to nurture. Pets that can be present for more than one day are limited to: earthworms, insects and ants that cannot sting or produce venom, guinea pigs, gerbils, hamsters, mice, hermit crabs, and fish. Sanitation is a priority and will be ensured by adherence to the following guidelines.

Staff working at sites operated by school districts must verify that animals are allowed in the school before introducing an animal to the Head Start classroom. Some school districts prohibit animals on school grounds.

- Because baby chicks, turtles, snakes, frogs and other reptiles (e.g. iguanas, lizards) can carry the salmonella bacteria in their feces, they are not allowed in the classroom. In addition, monkeys, hook-beaked birds, ferrets, and potentially aggressive animals are prohibited unless they are a part of an educational program run by a zoo, museum, or another professional animal handler. No wild animals may be present in the classroom at any time.
- Before an animal is introduced into a classroom, center staff must notify parents so that any child concerns (such as allergies or fears) may be discussed. Child Development Centers must notify parents in writing of any animal in the center.
- The center shall have and follow written procedures for the care and maintenance of the animals in the center.
- Animals should be in good health, show no signs of disease or illness (e.g. loss of fur, decreased appetite or activity), and be a friendly companion for the children or they must be removed from the center immediately.
- When immunizations are required, proof of current compliance signed by a veterinarian shall be on file at the center.
- Dogs and cats shall be maintained on a flea, tick, and worm control program. Products toxic to humans are prohibited.
- Animals shall be cared for as recommended by a veterinarian.
- Animals are not allowed in areas of classrooms where food is stored, prepared, or eaten. Except for fish, animals are not allowed in classrooms for infants or toddlers.
- Animals (except fish) must be housed in a cage with a removable bottom. The bottom must be lined with a non-permeable plastic liner. The cage must be cleaned and sanitized at regular intervals as recommended by the animal's veterinarian. The person cleaning the cage must wear gloves and not be pregnant. Children may not help or be present during cleaning. Remove droppings from the cage by lifting out the cage bottom liner to minimize the presence of airborne bacteria. Dispose of droppings from the cage in a sealed plastic bag. Wash hands immediately after cleaning.
- Keep animal food supplies out of children's reach and store them separately from human food supplies and equipment. Animal food shall be stored in a manner that does not attract rodents or

**Community Action Head Start
Washington County, Oregon**

insects. Keep chemicals and cleaning supplies related to the care of the animal stored in a locked cabinet separate from food supplies.

- Children may touch or handle animals only under adult supervision. Children may only hold an animal outside the cage. Only staff's hands are to be inside the animal cage.
- To ensure safety and prevent injury, teaching staff will follow and review guidelines with children:
 - Talk about how to handle (or not handle) animals prior to introducing a pet into the classroom. Demonstrate gentle, confident handling and avoid overzealous squeezing or shaking that may be startling or may provoke the animal to bite.
 - Teach about animal safety. Children must be well supervised when handling animals and not allowed to kiss an animal or eat its food. The animal is not allowed to roam freely around the classroom.
- Children and staff must wash their hands with soap and warm running water before handling the animal — the smell of food may invite an animal to bite — and immediately after touching or handling the animal.
- Animals that are present in the classroom for only one class visit (for example, a Petting Zoo) shall be treated with the same precautions as classroom pets, with the additional requirement that children are kept away from litter boxes.
- Teachers are responsible for training classroom staff, volunteers, and parents on all points of this policy and for monitoring the animal's well being.
- Program Area Supervisors will work with teachers to determine the number of animals that can be accommodated safely in the space available within each individual classroom.

SERVICE ANIMALS

Please contact the Health Services Supervisor or Disability & Mental Health Supervisor if there is a request for a service animal in the classroom.