



Chapter: Personnel
Subject: 03-50 – Canine Therapy Program
Effective: June 24, 2025
Supersedes: N/A
Distribution: Department Members

PURPOSE: This Order establishes guidelines for the management, deployment, and care of department-owned therapy dogs.

03-50-1 POLICY

It is the department's policy to provide a Canine Therapy Program to support the emotional and mental well-being of all members. This program is designed to assist members in coping with exposure to traumatic events while supporting efforts to build resilience and improve overall mental health and wellness.

03-50-2 DEFINITIONS

- A. **Primary Handler:** Member responsible for the care, training, and deployment of a therapy dog.
- B. **Secondary Handler:** Member who serves as a reserve therapy dog handler if the primary handler is unavailable due to illness, injury, or other reasons.
- C. **Therapy Dog:** A specially trained service dog that works in professional settings to provide therapeutic support, comfort, and assistance to individuals or groups in need.

03-50-3 AUTHORIZATION, CONDITIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

The Wellness and Resiliency Section shall have oversight of the department's Canine Therapy Program and shall maintain procedures specific to the acquisition, selection, disposition, and deployment of canine therapy teams.

- A. Authorized use of therapy dogs includes, but is not limited to:
 - (1) Worksite visits to support member wellness
 - (2) Wellness responses following critical incidents
 - (3) Hospital visits to provide comfort to injured members
 - (4) Attendance at debriefings conducted by the Office of Behavioral Sciences (OBS)
 - (5) Attendance at trainings sponsored by the Wellness and Resiliency Section

- (6) Attendance at professional conferences
 - (7) Community presentations
 - (8) Any other use deemed appropriate by the Wellness and Resiliency Section commander or their designee, provided it aligns with the program's objectives.
- B. Therapy dogs shall be requested by a worksite commander using the ADM-044 request form or for after-hours emergency requests by contacting the Operations Unit.
- (1) The Operations Unit may authorize an assignment of a canine therapy team in the event of an after-hours request, taking into consideration the need for an immediate response, distance to be traveled, incident severity, and the number of impacted members.
 - a. The Operations Unit member authorizing or denying a request shall notify the Wellness and Resiliency Section commander and the affected district or division commander via email.
 - (2) In the event of a dispute between a worksite commander and the Wellness and Resiliency Section commander about the authorization or denial of a canine therapy team response, the Organizational Development Division commander shall have final authority.
- C. Requests to support outside agencies will be considered on a case-by-case basis and require approval of the Wellness and Resiliency Section commander. Considerations will include but are not limited to, the severity of the incident, the number of affected people, the location of the request, and the status of the canine therapy team.
- D. Therapy dogs shall not be used in high-risk or physically demanding roles such as apprehension, detection, or agility-related tasks. They shall not be exposed to unnecessary risks, including volatile situations that could lead to injury or distress to the animal or those nearby.

03-50-4 QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

- A. Members assigned as a therapy dog handler shall be trained and certified through [Ultimate Canine](#) before conducting any official duties as a canine therapy team.
- (1) Therapy dog handlers shall maintain handler proficiency and complete annual re-certification.
- B. Therapy dogs shall receive and maintain a nationally registered therapy dog certification.
- C. Canine therapy teams shall conduct documented training once per week. This training shall be documented on the ADM-044.
- (1) Training sessions shall be used to optimize performance, correct deficiencies, practice specific training objectives, and complete other assignments as directed by the Wellness and Resiliency Section commander.
 - (2) Secondary therapy dog handlers shall accompany the primary handler on at least one training session each month to maintain their status as a handler.

03-50-5 REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

- A. All equipment, supplies, and services necessary for the care of a therapy dog shall be supplied by the department. At a minimum, therapy dogs shall be equipped with:
 - (1) Vest and leash for official duties
 - (2) Dog bed, mat, and/or crate for the primary handler's office and home
 - (3) Grooming equipment as required by the individual dog
- B. Enlisted handlers may wear the uniform of the day or fatigue pants, closed-toe athletic shoes, and a department-issued polo when performing handler duties.
- C. Civilian handlers shall wear fatigue pants, closed-toe athletic shoes, and a department-issued polo when performing handler duties.

03-50-6 TRANSPORTATION OF A THERAPY DOG

- A. When conducting any department-related activity, therapy dogs shall be transported using a department vehicle designated for maintaining the dog and any necessary equipment. Transportation in other department vehicles, including patrol vehicles, requires approval from the Wellness and Resiliency Section commander.
 - (1) A vehicle transporting the therapy dog shall never engage in emergency response driving or vehicle pursuits.
 - (2) A therapy dog shall never be left unattended in a vehicle for more than five minutes.
 - (3) A therapy dog shall not be transported in the same vehicle as a person in custody.
- B. When not conducting department-related activities, therapy dog handlers may transport a therapy dog in a personal vehicle that has been approved by the Wellness and Resiliency Section commander.

03-50-7 REQUIRED CARE

- A. The primary handler is responsible for:
 - (1) Care and feeding of their assigned therapy dog, including veterinary care.
 - (2) Administering medications and other treatments prescribed by a veterinarian.

03-50-8 INJURIES OR DAMAGE RELATED TO THERAPY DOGS

- A. If a department therapy dog injures a person (including a handler) or damages personal property, the handler shall immediately notify the Wellness and Resiliency Section commander. Upon notification, the commander shall follow the procedures outlined in written directives related to workplace injuries and property damage.
- B. The therapy dog handler shall complete an eAICS incident report and take photographs of any injuries or damage that occurred.
- C. When a dog bite occurs, the therapy dog involved shall be temporarily deactivated. The Wellness and Resiliency Section commander shall review the incident and document their findings. This report, along with any recommendations, shall be submitted to the Organizational Development Division commander. A canine therapy team on temporary deactivation shall not respond to calls; however, they may continue participating in

scheduled training exercises. After reviewing the report, the Organizational Development Division commander may reactivate the canine therapy team.

- (1) If the Wellness and Resiliency Section commander was the therapy dog handler involved, the review shall be conducted and documented by the Organizational Development Division commander.
- (2) If the Organizational Development Division commander was the therapy dog handler involved, the review shall be conducted and documented by the Professional Development Bureau commander or their designee.

DIRECTOR

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| Annual Review Responsibility: | Organizational Development Division, Wellness and Resiliency Section |
| Accreditation Standards: | CALEA 41.1.4 |