


NH DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURE DIRECTIVE Pursuant to RSA21-H:8 (III) Internal Practices and Procedures	CHAPTER <u>Personnel and Training</u> STATEMENT NUMBER <u>1295</u>
SUBJECT: COMFORT DOG PROGRAM PROPONENT: <u>Director of Personnel and Information</u> <small>Name/Title</small> <hr/> Commissioner's Office <u>271-5603</u> <small>Division Phone #</small>	EFFECTIVE DATE <u>2/21/2022</u> REVIEW DATE <u>2/21/2025</u> SUPERSEDES PPD# _____ DATED <u>02/18/2022</u>
ISSUING OFFICER:  <hr/> <small>Helen E. Hanks, Commissioner</small>	DIRECTOR'S INITIALS: _____ DATE: _____ APPENDIX ATTACHED: _____ YES: _____ NO: _____
REFERENCE NO: See reference section on last page of PPD.	

- (a) **PURPOSE:**
 To establish guidelines for the procedures, application, deployment, training, care, maintenance, transportation, reporting and disposition of the New Hampshire Department of Corrections' (NHDOC) Comfort Dog program.
- (b) **APPLICABILITY:**
 All NHDOC employees.
- (c) **POLICY:**
 It is the policy of the NHDOC that Comfort Dog Teams (canine and handler) utilized by the Department will be highly trained in all related aspects of their duties; thereby enhancing the services provided to NHDOC employees and the community.
- (d) **PROCEDURE:**
- (1) **General Considerations.**
 - a. A trained Comfort Dog Team is an extremely valuable asset to the NHDOC.
 - b. Functions of the Comfort Dog are to improve interaction, mitigate stress, and increase communication between department employees, and the citizens, business, and visitors.
 - c. A trained Comfort Dog will provide aid and comfort for individuals during times of crisis, as well as assist individuals, groups and communities impacted by violence, tragedy, or traumatic events.
 - (2) **Comfort Dog Handler(s).**
 - a. Primary Handler.
 1. Selection.
 - (i) The selection of a primary Comfort Dog handler will be at the discretion of the Commissioner or designee.

- (ii) The Comfort Dog handler selection process will be managed directly by the Commissioner or their assigned designee.
 - 2. Handler(s) must be in good performance standing with the NHDOC, and may be either a sworn or unsworn member of NHDOC.
 - 3. Handlers shall have a demonstrated record of positive interaction with members of the department and community.
 - 4. Handler(s) shall have at least one (1) year of satisfactory performance evaluations.
 - b. Handler(s) shall at all times use good judgment when utilizing the Comfort Dog.
 - c. **Housing.**
Handlers must reside in housing that is safe and of a nature suitable for a dog to reside. Consideration of living conditions will be reviewed by the Commissioner or his/her designee on a case-by-case basis.
 - d. **Secondary Handlers.**
 - 1. In addition to a Primary Handler, Secondary Handlers may be appointed by the Commissioner, after consultation with the Primary Handler and supervisory personnel.
 - 2. Secondary Handlers may assist the Primary Handler when necessary and may serve in the capacity of a Primary Handler when the Primary Handler is temporarily unavailable to care for and maintain the dog.
 - 3. Secondary Handlers must meet the same requirements as the Primary handler, as outlined above.
 - e. **Personally owned Comfort Dogs.**
 - 1. In the event that a NHDOC employee has a personally owned comfort dog that meets the requirements outlined in Section (5), Training; is up to date on all required vaccinations; proof of liability insurance is presented and maintained as current and, is suitable to work in the corrections environment, the Commissioner may grant approval for use of the dog at a NHDOC facility.
 - 2. In the case of a personally owned comfort dog, training, vet care, equipment, food, transportation, liability insurance, and all other costs associated for the care of the dog, is the responsibility of the handler. The handler is held responsible for the actions of the dog at all times. There will be no additional compensation for a dog handler in this scenario.
- (3) Use of the Comfort Dog Team(s).
- a. Comfort Dog handlers will submit a biweekly facility visit schedule to the Administrator of Communications.
 - b. **Critical Incident Stress Management & Peer-to-Peer Team.**
 - 1. A Comfort Dog Team may be authorized by the Commissioner to assist any Department employee, law enforcement personnel, Critical Incident Response Team, or similar entity, upon request.
 - 2. A Comfort Dog Team may be made available to provide support services during and after a department's response to a critical incident, including the defusing and debrief which may occur after each critical incident.
 - 3. A Comfort Dog Team may also be made available to Critical Incident Response Team in order to provide support services to Department employees and the law enforcement community, in order to improve mental health and wellbeing of personnel.
 - c. **Community Relations.**

1. Requests for appearances by the Comfort Dog will be coordinated through the Public Information Officer and Primary Handler, and approved by the Office of the Commissioner, utilizing the *Comfort Dog Request Form* (Attachment 1).
 2. Requests should be provided far enough in advance to allow for proper approval and scheduling.
- d. The Commissioner, or his/her designee, may authorize the use of the Comfort Dog for purposes not specifically outlined in this policy, on a case-by-case basis.

(4) Limitations on Deployment and Use of the Comfort Dog Team(s).

- a. Only those designated as Primary or Secondary Handlers shall perform any duties with the Comfort Dog(s).
- b. Handlers will be responsible to educate members of the Department and public when they can or cannot interact with the Comfort Dog.
 1. The Comfort Dog shall not be left unattended by the Primary or Secondary Handler while on duty except in an emergency or an otherwise authorized circumstance.
 2. Under no circumstances shall members of the Department, other than Handlers, attempt to utilize verbal or physical commands to control the actions of the Comfort Dog.
 3. No one shall feed anything to the Comfort Dog without the Handler's permission.
- c. Prohibited Uses.
 1. The Comfort Dog is not trained to defend itself or to be used for aggressive purposes.
 2. The Comfort Dog shall not be used as a less lethal tool for the Department.
 3. The Comfort Dog shall not be asked to perform a task for which it is not trained such as drug detection.
- d. Prior to deploying a Comfort Dog Team, the location must be safe and secure for the dog and handler. The handler of the Comfort Dog has the ultimate decision on whether to deploy the Comfort Dog based upon the circumstances at the time.
- e. Requests to deploy a Comfort Dog Team outside of DOC facilities shall be coordinated through the Commissioner or his/her designee.

(5) Training.

- a. Upon their initial selection, all Comfort Dog Teams (dog and Primary Handler) shall receive initial foundational training and/or proficiency testing in accordance with a nationally recognized canine organization, or other certifying association, approved by the Commissioner or his/her designee.
 1. A puppy or canine "in training," may be used as a Comfort Dog while it is undergoing training as long as it has been evaluated and approved by the Commissioner or his/her designee.
- b. This foundational program training shall help the handler and canine to develop a relationship built on clarity, consistency and trust; and, shall explore the essentials of good "dogmanship," and cover topics to include:
 1. The dog learning process;
 2. Body language;
 3. Etiquette;
 4. Structure and management;
 5. Communication with markers;
 6. Leash handling; and,
 7. Rewards and rate of reinforcement.
 8. Dogs should learn the basics of sit, down, place, and come when called.

- c. Comfort Dog teams will train on a regular basis to maintain proficiency and operational readiness.
 - d. Comfort Dog teams (dog and each handler) shall obtain the following American Kennel Club (AKC) Certifications and maintain these certifications in accordance with AKC standards:
 - 1. AKC, Canine Good Citizen (CGC) Certification;
 - e. Other trainings which may be obtained, but are not required:
 - 1. AKC, Canine Good Citizen Advanced (CGCA) – Community Canine Certification; and,
 - 2. AKC, Urban Canine Good Citizen (UCGC) Certification..
 - f. Comfort Dog Handlers shall receive training in the following topics:
 - 1. Mental health & behavioral health awareness, symptoms recognition, effective communication, local treatment options.
 - 2. Victim/witness support, advocacy and multidisciplinary team models.
 - 3. Individual Crisis Intervention.
 - 4. Group Crisis Intervention
 - 5. Crisis Intervention Stress Management or other related topics
 - 6. Community Affairs.
 - 7. Canine First Aid.
 - 8. First Responder mental health and wellness topics.
 - g. The Primary Handler shall ensure that the above listed training is conducted and will ensure that the proper training records are maintained for each Comfort Dog team in the primary handler's personnel file.
- (6) Care, Maintenance and Transportation of Comfort Dogs.
- a. An employee assigned to a NHDOC owned Comfort Dog as a Primary or Secondary Handler shall, at all times, be held responsible for his/her Comfort Dog and any related equipment assigned to him/her.
 - 1. He/she shall, at all times, use good judgment in the deployment of his/her Comfort Dog.
 - 2. He/she shall be humane in the treatment of his/her Comfort Dog, and shall be held strictly accountable for any abuse or neglect upon to criminal charges to which the Comfort Dog is subjected while in their care.
 - b. Veterinary Treatment.
 - 1. Each NHDOC owned Comfort Dog shall receive an annual veterinary examination, at a veterinary facility that is to be determined by the Commissioner or his/her designee.
 - (i) The Comfort Dog shall be provided with immunizations and general health care, as determined by a veterinarian, at that facility and as prescribed by law.
 - (ii) It shall be brought to the attention of the veterinarian that police dogs are to receive rabies vaccinations annually as prescribed by NH RSA 436:100 and 436:105-c.
 - 2. Routine health examinations or checkups, due to minor injury or illness, that are not of an emergency nature, must be approved by the Commissioner or his/her designee, prior to the appointment.
 - (i) The cost of this visit will be covered by the NHDOC.
 - (ii) A copy of the invoice will be placed in the Comfort Dog's file.
 - 3. In the event of a medical emergency, the Comfort Dog handler shall bring the canine to the chosen veterinary hospital or a suitable emergency veterinary facility.
 - (i) If on duty, he/she shall notify his/her supervisor that the team is out of service.

- (ii) If off duty, the handler shall notify The Office of the Commissioner of the situation, as soon as practicable.
- c. NHDOC owned Comfort Dogs shall reside with the Primary Handler. In the event that the Primary Handler cannot maintain and care for the Comfort Dog for short periods of time, i.e. vacation, etc., the Comfort Dog may reside with a Secondary Handler or with another person approved by the Commissioner or his/her designee. The Commissioner or his/her designee shall be notified in the event that the Comfort Dog will be staying with the Secondary Handler or any other person.
- d. NHDOC shall be responsible for all reasonable costs associated with the NHDOC owned Comfort Dog including feeding, upkeep, veterinarian and medical expenses, training expenses, kennels/crates, and assigned equipment.
 - 1. Any elective veterinary treatment shall be subject to the approval of the Commissioner or his/her designee.
- e. All Comfort Dogs must be licensed and meet all health requirements, and are subject to all state laws pertaining to dogs.
- f. Comfort Dog Handlers are responsible for cleaning up any mess left by their dog while on duty.
- g. Comfort Dog handlers may utilize Department issued vehicles for transporting the Comfort Dog while on duty. The Comfort Dog shall not be left unaccompanied in a vehicle that is not equipped with heat sensors or is otherwise unsuitable due to environmental reasons.
- h. Department owned Comfort Dogs are the property of the NHDOC. The Department may compensate NHDOC owned Comfort Dog handlers in accordance with NHDOC K9 handlers, applicable statute/laws, or as stipulated in collective bargaining agreement(s). Compensation is at the discretion of the Commissioner based on department budget.
 - 1. Comfort dog handlers of a NHDOC owned Comfort Dog will be allocated one (1) hour of each assigned duty day to be solely dedicated to care, feeding, training, grooming, and exercise of the comfort dog. Each comfort dog handler of a NHDOC owned Comfort Dog will be compensated one (1) hour for the same, on each day off, to include weekends, holidays, and vacation time
- i. The comfort dogs primary handler will be responsible for documenting any trainings and calls for service, and inputting the information into a shared personnel and information electronic log.
- j. NHDOC owned Comfort dog expenses and requests, including but not limited to, damaged equipment or replacements, food, bedding, etc., shall be forwarded to the Administrator of Communications, and submitted through the Director of Personnel and Information for payment by NHDOC.
- k. Equipment inventory will be maintained by the Comfort dog handler, and submitted monthly to the Administrator of Communications on the *Comfort Dog Equipment Inventory form* (Attachment 2):
 - 1. One (1) comfort dog vest;
 - 2. Two (2) 6' Dog Leash;
 - 3. Two (2) Dog Collar;
 - 4. Two (2) Synthetic Tugs;
 - 5. Two (2) Dog Dishes;
 - 6. Two (2) Fabric Dog Beds
 - 7. Two (1) Wire Dog Crates

(7) Reporting Procedures and Record Keeping.

- a. The Commissioner will be advised by the Administrator of Communications of all instances in which a Comfort Dog was utilized for any purpose, on a monthly basis at a minimum.
- b. A permanent record of all Comfort Dog related activities shall be maintained by the Comfort Dog's Primary (and Secondary Handler, only when acting as the primary handler), and shall consist of, but not be limited to, the following:
 1. Date, time, location, and employee (or outside agency) requesting Comfort Dog services.
 2. A brief description of the Comfort Dog services provided. including but not limited to:
 - (i) Information about the support services provided;
 - (ii) Description of victim, witness, employee or first responder impacted by the services provided; and,
 - (iii) Any specific information related to the services provided.
- c. Records of injury to, or biting of any human, by a Comfort Dog shall be handled in accordance with RSA 436:105-c:
 1. Each handler shall immediately report, in writing, to the Commissioner, fully and completely, the injury to, or biting of a human by his/her Comfort Dog.
 2. An *Incident Report* shall be completed, pursuant to PPD 378 *Notification of Incidents and/or Events*.
 3. Photographs shall be taken of any wound inflicted upon a human by the Comfort Dog, as soon as possible after the injury is inflicted, but AFTER the wound has been cleaned and checked by medical personnel. These photographs shall be attached to the *Incident Report* completed as a result of this incident.
 4. Any person injured and/or bitten by a Comfort Dog shall be given the opportunity to receive medical treatment. An ambulance shall be summoned for the person who has been injured and/or bitten and, if medical treatment is refused, that person shall sign a form acknowledging his/her refusal to receive medical treatment. A copy of this refusal shall be attached to the incident report.
- d. Utilizing the intent of NH RSA 436:105-c in our law enforcement environment, a police dog that has bitten a person may remain in service subject to the following:
 1. The canine shall have received annual immunization for rabies in accordance with NH RSA 436:100.
 2. The handler shall prepare the required incident report as described in this policy.
 3. The handler shall be responsible for observing the dog for 10 days after the bite occurred, and shall have the dog examined by a veterinarian at the end of the 10-day period.
 - (i) The Comfort Dog shall not be utilized for any duties during the 10-day period.
 - (ii) If signs of rabies develop during the 10-day period, the handler will follow the instructions of the licensed veterinarian which may include up to euthanization and at the direction of the veterinarian, the head (of the canine) shall be sent for examination to the Public Health Laboratory, Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to NH RSA 436:105.
- e. Records of all training sessions shall include:
 1. Date, time, type, and location of training conducted;
 2. the instructor (if applicable); and,
 3. any specialized training activity conducted.
- f. Records of all veterinary care, including routine and emergency care, shall include:
 1. Date of service;
 2. Attending veterinarian/animal hospital; and,

3. Illness or injury treated, including a prognosis (determination of the seriousness of the infirmity and its ultimate result) and length of time that the Comfort Dog may be out of service.
 4. The written records of any veterinary care will be provided to the Office of the Commissioner.
 - g. Any staff person with reportable concerns regarding the Comfort Dog(s), Handler(s), or Comfort Dog Program will remit such concerns in a timely manner to the Commissioner or designee for triage and resolution.
 - h. The comfort dog will have a maintained personnel record associated with the primary handler as managed and stored at the direction of the Director of Personnel and Training.
- (8) Service Agreement for Comfort Dog(s).
- a. All Comfort Dogs that are the property of the NHDOC; the department shall reasonably maintain the dog(s), and shall retain the responsibility for the dog(s), insofar as they remain active in the Comfort Dog Program.
 - b. The NHDOC retains ownership of the NHDOC owned Comfort Dog even if the Handler terminates his/her employment with the DOC, except that if such handler has handled said dog for a period exceeding five (5) years, and/or such dog has a registered age of seven (7) years or older.
 1. Under these circumstances, the Primary handler may purchase said dog, from the NHDOC, for the sum of one dollar (\$1.00).
 - c. Under the conditions listed in item (8)b, when the Comfort Dog is purchased by the Handler after employment termination, the dog shall not be used for service in any other police department or private organization without the permission of the Commissioner or his/her designee.
 1. The Comfort Dog will remain a common pet, except that if such employment with another organization is intended, the dog can be purchased, from the NHDOC, for the sum of five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00), to defray the cost of training and developing a new Comfort Dog for the program.
 - d. If the Comfort Dog is retained solely as a common pet, as set forth in item (8)c, the dog may not be sold or otherwise given to any party except that in such case as the owner wishes to relieve themselves of the responsibility for such dog. Given this circumstance, NHDOC has the right of first refusal, to purchase the Comfort Dog, for the sum of one dollar (\$1.00).
- (9) Retirement from Service of a NHDOC owned Comfort Dog.
- a. Comfort Dogs will not be retired without the authorization of the Commissioner or his/her designee.
 - b. Recommendations to retire a Comfort Dog based on insight from the treating veterinarian and primary handler will be forwarded to the Commissioner through the appropriate chain of command.
 - c. Following consultation, if necessary, with a veterinarian and/or approved trainer, the Commissioner or his/her designee will make the determination as to whether the Comfort Dog will be retired.
 - d. If it is determined that the Comfort Dog should be retired, the Primary Handler will have the option of purchasing the dog from NHDOC for the sum of one dollar (\$1.00), for personal use. In the event that the Primary Handler declines to purchase the dog, the dog may be offered up for sale to a Secondary Handler or another member of the Department, at the discretion of the Commissioner or his/her designee.

- e. Recommendations to remove a Comfort Dog from service, for performance related issues, will be forwarded to the Commissioner or his/her designee, through the appropriate chain of command.
 1. Following consultation, if necessary, with a veterinarian and/or an approved trainer, the Commissioner or his/her designee will make the determination as to whether the Comfort Dog should be removed from service.
 2. If it is determined that the Comfort Dog should be removed from service, the Primary Handler will have the option of purchasing the dog, from the DOC, for the sum of one dollar (\$1.00), for personal use.
 3. In the event that the Primary Handler declines purchasing the dog, the dog may be offered up for purchase to a Secondary Handler, or another member of the Department, at the discretion of the Commissioner or his/her designee.
- f. In the event that the Department discontinues the Comfort Dog program, the Comfort Dog shall be made available for purchase, from NHDOC, for the sum of one dollar (\$1.00), to the Primary Handler. If the Primary Handler declines to make this purchase, the dog may be offered up for purchase to a Secondary Handler or another member of the Department at the discretion of NHDOC or his/her designee.
- g. In all instances where a Comfort Dog is sold, retired or is removed from service, the Department will no longer bear responsibility for any expenses related to the care and maintenance of the dog.

REFERENCES:

Introduction of Facility Therapy Dogs to 911 Communication Centers: A Proposal, by Mariya Dvoskina and Garry Cole (*Traumatology, American Psychological Association*), 2020, Vol. 26, Iss. 1, pp. 147–151. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/trm0000215>.

Developing an animal-assisted support program for healthcare employees, Etingen et al. (*BMC Health Services Research*), 2020, 20:714 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-020-05586-8>

The presence of a dog attenuates cortisol and heart rate in the Trier Social Stress Test compared to human friends, by John P. Polheber and Robert L. Matchock (*J Behav Med*), 2013 (2014) 37:860–867.

The World of the Comfort Dog Aka Crisis response dog. September 15, 2021. [<https://www.certapet.com/comfort-dog/>]

An argument for widespread use of therapy dogs in policing, by Doug Wyllie. Police Magazine (online), May 9, 2019. [<https://www.policemag.com/512359/an-argument-for-widespread-use-of-therapy-dogs-in-policing>]

Other

RSA 436:100

RSA 436:105-c

PPD 378 *Notification of Incidents and/or Events*

Attachments

Attachment 1 *Comfort Dog Request Form*

Attachment 2 *Comfort Dog Equipment Inventory*

RAYMOND/tt



New Hampshire Department of Corrections
Comfort Dog Request Form



Date Submitted to PIO: _____

To request a visit from the NHDOC comfort dog, please fill in the requested information with as much detail as possible.

For the best chance of approval of your requested date/time, return to the Public Information Officer at least 2 weeks in advance.

If possible, list at least three alternate dates/times that are appropriate in case your preferred time is not available.

Your Name: _____

Your location: _____

Location of Requested Visit: _____

Purpose of Visit: _____

Requested Day/Time 1st choice: _____

2nd choice: _____

3rd choice: _____

PIO/Handler Use Only

Date received: _____

Handler Name: _____

Dog's Name: _____

Date of Visit approved: _____

Notes: _____

Commissioner's Approval

Commissioner's signature

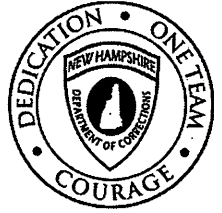
Date

Requestor Notified? Yes No Date: _____

Original maintained by the Commissioner's Office; copy to the Handler's file



New Hampshire Department of Corrections Comfort Dog Equipment Inventory Form



Name of Handler: _____

Name of Dog: _____

Month/Year: _____

If item does not apply, enter "n/a" as the quantity.

Item	Quantity	Condition	Replacement Needed?	Comments
Comfort Dog Vest				
Collar				
Leash				
Synthetic Tugs				
Water Bowl				
Food Bowl				
Dog Bed				
Wire Crates				
Vehicle Temp. Alarm (optional)				
Other DOC Provided Items				

Handler Signature: _____

Date: _____

Complete by the 5th of each month and submit to the Administrator of Communications.