

916 AAI PARTNER APPLICATION PROCESS

AAI, animal-assisted interactions (or “Interventions”). This term was specifically created to describe the social and emotional learning services, or “interactions”, the AAI program provides at Northeast Metro Intermediate School District 916.

BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS:

Animal-Assisted Interactions (AAI) Specialist/Staff Handler

An Animal-Assisted Interactions Specialist is an education/human service provider who delivers and/or directs Animal-Assisted Interactions (AAI). For purposes of the program at ISD 916, the Animal-Assisted Interaction Specialist (or “Staff Handler”) has expertise in incorporating animals in an “interaction” (educationally) and is knowledgeable about the animal with whom he/she works. The Animal-Assisted Interactions Specialist is licensed and/or recognized by a separate education or human service professional discipline. This individual complies with the legal and ethical requirements of his or her profession as well as local, state, and federal laws relating to this work.

To align with federal law, interactions with animals (AAI) are not therapy without the guidance or supervision of a credentialed therapist. Animals operating in AAI are NOT service animals and are NOT granted the same rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Animals are never “used” in AAI sessions, but are treated as a partner in a mutually beneficial relationship. The AAI Specialist must be able to balance the needs of his other animal partner with the needs of the students participating in AAI.

AAI sessions are NOT animal training sessions. AAI Specialists must work with their animal in a way that promotes the perception of the team’s reliability, controllability, predictability, suitability, and ability to inspire confidence.

Specific Qualifications for AAI Specialists:

1. Maintain credentialing through a professional or volunteer organization.
2. Maintain screening and training for their animal partner with whom they work.
3. Comply with all expectations which apply to the conduct of AAI services and the presence of animals at ISD 916.
4. Practice AAI only within the scope of one’s professional training and licensure.

Canine Partner

For the purposes of the program at 916, the animals involved in the Animal-Assisted Interactions (AAI) program are specifically trained as Therapy Dogs and in excellent health in order to participate effectively and safely. They meet the aptitude, size, age, and skill level required by a nationally accredited training program.

AAI Specialists must work with their animals in a way that promotes the perception of the team’s reliability, controllability, predictability and ability to inspire confidence.

Specific Qualifications for Dogs:

1. Certified as a Therapy Dog through a nationally accredited training program.
2. Has been living with the AAI Specialist (staff handler) for at least 6 months.
3. Receives annual vaccinations, rabies, and other screening tests (i.e., fecal screen).
4. Actively solicits interactions with people.
5. Likes being petted and touched.
6. Is accepting and forgiving of differences in people's reactions and behavior.
7. Is more "people-oriented" versus "animal-oriented".
8. Remains calm in a variety of distracting situations.
9. Can walk on a variety of surfaces, i.e., carpet, vinyl, wood, stairs, elevators, etc.

APPLICATION AND TRAINING PROCESS:

1. Complete Therapy Dog training through a nationally accredited training program
2. Complete application and forward to Val Rae Boe
3. 916 cabinet will review applications and approve or deny within 2 weeks from receiving the application.

Program Monitoring of AAI Interactions

916 site administration, along with the specialist (staff handler), monitors interactions to determine whether continued work is appropriate.

Program Discretion for Participation

The principal at each site has the discretion to approve each classroom or student to participate in AAI. Furthermore, the principal may determine additional parameters placed on specific interactions due to the staff handler's assigned classroom, location or specific role in the building. Some programs may not be appropriate for AAI due to building structure, staff to student ratio (there is not adequate additional time for staff to work with an animal partner in addition to their employment duties), or student needs and behaviors (allergies, or disruptive and dangerous behaviors).

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT – AAI Specialist (Staff Handler)

All AAI Specialists are urged to become familiar with the standards of conduct and are expected to follow these standards faithfully in doing their own jobs and when working with their canine partner.

Animal-Assisted Interactions Specialist (Staff Handler) Standards of Conduct:

1. Maintain current veterinary records and vaccinations for his/her animal.
2. Maintain all appropriate certifications for his/her animal.
3. Monitor his/her animal's behavior and health during the animal's participation and bring to the building principal any concerns or questions.
4. Remove the animal participating in AAI if the animal exhibits health or behavioral issues that deem that animal no longer appropriate for the ISD 916 setting
5. Abide by the "AAI Specialist" expectations (p.1)
6. Provide annually before each school year: current health certificate from the vet, current certification from the nationally accredited training program and, if you are bringing your partner during your contracted duty day, a copy of your insurance indicating liability coverage while you are at work with your animal. **Please note:** some certification programs provide coverage while you are volunteering, however, this will not cover you while you are receiving a pay check. Send copies of the above three documents annually to Val Rae Boe.

916 AAI CANINE TEAM APPLICATION

HUMAN PARTNER

Name: _____

916 email: _____

916 phone: _____

916 position: _____

916 program/s: _____

CANINE PARTNER

Name: _____

Gender: _____

Altered: YES _____ NO _____

Breed/s if known: _____

Age if known: _____ D.O.B if known _____

How long have you owned your canine partner: _____

Therapy Dog Certification Organization: _____ Date Certified: _____

Other trainings - level/type completed: _____

How do you envision partnering with your canine during your work day:

*Please include a photo of you and your canine partner with your application for our records and AAI web page.

Program Manager/Supervisor Signature:

Date _____

Submit your application via interoffice mail to:

Val Rae Boe, Superintendent

The district office will contact you following review of the information you provide.

For additional information contact: vboe@916schools.org