



POLICY & PROCEDURE

PORTAGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: **THERAPY CANINE PROGRAM**

SCOPE: All Sworn Personnel
DISTRIBUTION: Policy & Procedure Manual

REFERENCE:

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At this time the department does not have a therapy canine program 04/07/2025.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Policy & Procedure is to provide guidelines for the Portage Police Department to utilize a Therapy canine for use within the community.

This Policy & Procedure consists of the following numbered sections:

- I. POLICY
- II. DEFINITION
- III. PROCEDURES

I. POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the Portage Police Department to utilize a therapy canine as a valuable supplement to police services for victims and witnesses as well as community service events and opportunities, including to enhance the services of School Resource Officers (SRO) in providing therapeutic aid to students and building positive relationships between police and citizens in the schools and the Portage community, by implementing a well-trained dog(s) as a medium in those efforts.

The utilization of the therapy canine requires cooperation between the law enforcement handler and the subjects or events utilizing the therapy canine.

II. DEFINITION

A. THERAPY CANINE TEAM: A trained officer and their assigned therapy canine.

III. PROCEDURES

A. On Duty Use of the Therapy Canine Team

1. The therapy canine team shall perform their regular duties in addition to their canine duties and will be under the same chain of command as any other department employee.
2. During those hours when the therapy canine team is on duty, it shall be called to and or respond to those assignments where a therapy canine could be of assistance. Examples could include school lock downs, traumatic events, large-scale incidents where groups of people may be affected, and other case-by-case basis.

B. Deployment of the Therapy Canine Team

1. Officers shall contact a shift supervisor to call out a therapy canine team when a team is not on-duty. The therapy canine handler has the authority for determining if the circumstances to justify the use of the therapy canine.
2. If the therapy canine handler believes that the use of the therapy canine is unjustified or is tactically unfeasible, they will advise the supervisor.
3. Upon the therapy canine's arrival at the scene, the situation shall be fully explained by the officer or supervisor making the request.
4. Therapy canines will not be used against the handler's advice.
5. When the therapy canine team is deployed, all officers at the scene shall comply with the request of the therapy canine handler.

C. Types of Calls when the therapy canine team may be utilized:

1. Sexual assaults, domestic violence situations, suicides, abductions, deaths, school threats, etc.
2. Any other traumatic event where an officer determines that an individual or group of people would benefit from the use of a therapy canine.
3. Any community service events.
4. Law enforcement or first responder debriefings.

D. Off Duty Use of the Therapy Canine Team

1. The therapy canine team may be called out on their off-duty time to respond to a scene.

2. If the therapy canine handler is not going to be available during time off for any extended period of time, they need to notify canine unit coordinator.
3. The on-duty/on-call Patrol Supervisor must be notified of any mutual-aid request from another agency outside of Portage for the assistance of a therapy canine team. The request must be made by hard copy (TTY). This applies to on and off duty time.

E. Administrative Duties

1. The canine handler will keep complete training records and will supply a quarterly summary to the Chief or designee itemizing all training and canine related events, medical and health records, and performance records.

F. Therapy Canine Handler

1. The department therapy canine handler will be responsible for:
 - a) Feeding and caring for their therapy canine.
 - b) Ongoing training for their therapy canine.
 - c) Ensuring proper yearly vaccination for the therapy canine is maintained.
 - d) Reporting all injuries or complications with their therapy canine to the Chief or designee. A complete report of the injury will be completed by the canine handler and given to the Chief or designee. This report will include but is not limited to: type of injury, treatment, where treated, how injury occurred, where the injury occurred and prognosis.

All medical attention shall be rendered by the designated canine veterinarian, except during an emergency where treatment should be obtained from the nearest available veterinarian. All records of medical treatment shall be maintained in the canine's personnel file.

G. Equipment

1. The department shall provide:
 - a) Food and veterinarian care for therapy canine.
 - b) Necessary equipment for the therapy canine team.
 - c) Housing costs for the therapy canine. (The Chief may do kennel inspections).

H. Canine Coordinator

1. The Canine Unit Coordinator shall be the Chief of Police or designee. The Canine Unit Coordinator shall be responsible for, but not limited to:
 - a) Ensure the officer completes the assigned basic training program.
 - b) Review Canine Officer's monthly reports and maintain records of the same. If used for de-escalation in a school, note any co-teaching (a lesson on teaching elementary students how to ask to pet a dog in public) or public relations in and out of our own community.
 - c) Be responsible for all records of the canine program, such as, selection, handler training, monthly evaluations, activities, arrests and apprehensions, and financial records of cost/reimbursement.
 - (1) Costs include: Items purchased for the canine, patrol vehicle or officer; overtime, training or other wage related categories; vehicle mileage and fuel usage for calls related to the Canine when used outside Portage; medical bills related to the Canine.
 - (d) Ensure required maintenance training is conducted.
 - (e) Assign public relations duties such as events in the community and at nursing homes, any public or private school events, National Night out, etc.

I. End of Canine Therapy service

1. Whenever a therapy canine is removed from active service due to health issues, physical inability to perform the task or another similar situation, the canine will be offered to the handler. A canine removed for viciousness or some other similar situations shall not be offered to the handler.
 - (a) If the canine is to be released from its assignment, the new owner will be required to sign a waiver of legal liability, releasing the City of Portage, the Portage Police Department and department personnel from all liability or responsibility for anything which concerns the canine from that day forward.
 - (b) The new owner receiving the canine must, as a condition of their receipt of the canine, immediately re-license the dog in the new owner's name at their expense. All pedigree papers will be given to the new owner receiving the canine.
 - (c) In the event of the death of the canine, the following procedures will be followed:
 - (1) The Police Chief will be immediately notified.
 - (2) If no necropsy is necessary, the chief and handler shall make arrangements with the veterinarian for proper disposal.

J. Canine Handler separation

1. This section governs whenever a handler chooses to separate from the program, this department, or is terminated.
 - a) Whenever a canine handler chooses to resign from the position of canine handler, resigns from the department or is otherwise terminated, the canine will be boarded at a proper facility or with an interim handler until such a time a new handler is selected. Costs associated with the boarding or other fees, as well as transition costs to a new handler will be paid for by funds designated for the canine program.
 - b) The canine and all associated property are owned by the Portage Police department. The handler retains no rights to the canine itself or any equipment or materials associated with the canine program. The department reserves the right to sell the canine and any associated property to another law enforcement agency or private party.
 - c) The canine and associated property may be offered for sale to the handler at an agreed price by the Chief and Portage City Council. Any equipment or other property personally purchased by the handler must have been previously documented and reimbursed by funds associated with the canine program. Equipment or property that was not properly documented is considered property of the department.

K. Selection of Therapy Canine Handler

1. The following are the minimum qualifications for the assignment of therapy canine handler.
 - (a) The officer's residence shall be capable of housing the canine and have adequate space for the construction of a kennel. The officer will be required to house the canine at their residence. In the event the officer does not own the property; the officer shall obtain written permission from the property owner for the housing of the canine.
 - (b) Any officer selected for the position of therapy canine handler should expect to remain in the canine unit for the working life of the dog, unless authorized by the Chief.
 - (c) The officer shall be in good health and not suffer from serious medical problems and must be strong enough to withstand the dog handling, training and work conditions.
 - (d) The officer shall have family in agreement with their being assigned to the canine unit.
 - (e) If there are pets in the home, the handler shall agree that if conflict occurs between the canine and the pet, which compromises the canine's ability to

live and function with the pet, that the canine will be kept separate and handled independently from the other pet.

- (f) Handlers wishing to reside outside of the city of Portage, and be issued a take home a vehicle designated for a canine, must have approval from the Chief.

L. Annual Review and Reporting

- 1. By January 10th of each year, the canine unit coordinator and canine handler shall compile an annual report to the Chief. The following shall be included in the report.

- a) Total Training Hours and Certifications

- Date, Time, Location and Type of Training or Certification

- b) Medical and Health records

- Date, Time, Location and Type of Medical Care/Treatment

- c) Total Call Logs. Logs should include:

- Dates, times and locations of Canine Requests
 - Requested Agency and Officer
 - Reason for the Request
 - Outcome of the Request

- d) Costs associated with the Canine Program. Costs include:

- Items purchased for the canine, patrol vehicle or officer.
 - Overtime, training or other wage related categories submitted for approval
 - Vehicle mileage for calls related to the canine.

Keith Klafke
Chief of Police

This Policy & Procedure cancels and supersedes any and all previous written directives relative to the subject matter contained herein.

Initial 04/07/2025