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## **Administrative Policy and Procedure for Therapy Canines**

- 1.0 Purpose** – To establish the State Crime Laboratory Policy for therapy canines.
- 2.0 Scope** – This policy applies to therapy canines for the Forensic Scientists assigned to the Digital Evidence Section.
- 3.0 Background** - Scientific studies and recommendations from the laboratory psychiatrist, Dr. Robert Rella of Cary Psychology and consultation with veterinarian Dr. Nicki Young of Bunn Animal Hospital support the use of a therapy canine to assist Laboratory employees when asked to perform stressful and emotional mental tasks such as examining cases for child pornography and exploitation of minors. Research indicates that having a therapy canine present reduces stress hormone levels and boosts the “feel good” chemicals in the brain, serotonin and dopamine. Research also indicates that people respond more to a canine than to a person in dealing with stressful situations since the canine is not judgmental and provides unconditional support.
- 4.0 Policy**
  - 4.1 Selection of Therapy Canine Handlers**
    - 4.1.1** A canine handler must be a Forensic Scientist in the Digital Evidence Section, possess a strong desire to work with canines, and be willing to work with an assigned canine for a minimum of five years, providing that the canine’s health is good for this time period.
    - 4.1.2** Forensic Scientists requesting assignment as a canine handler shall submit a written request through his/her Forensic Scientist Manager to the Assistant Director of Administrative Operations.
    - 4.1.3** Since the addition of the canine will require additional time by the canine handler, the Forensic Scientist Manager of the Digital Evidence Section shall ensure that the addition of the canine is welcomed and accepted by the canine handler’s family.
    - 4.1.4** The canine handler’s home must be a safe environment for the canine. The Forensic Scientist Manager of the Digital Evidence Section shall inspect the prospective canine handler’s residence to ensure the prospective canine handler has an appropriate environment and safe residence for the canine. This inspection shall be documented in a memorandum.
  - 4.2 Selection, Training, Certification, and Registration**
    - 4.2.1** The Forensic Scientist Manager and canine handler shall select the therapy canine. The Director shall give final approval of the selected canine.
    - 4.2.2** The therapy canine will be property of the Laboratory.
    - 4.2.3** The selected canine shall receive approved formalized training as a therapy canine. Documentation of training shall be provided to the Laboratory and retained by the Digital Evidence Section.

- 4.2.4** Once the canine has successfully completed training, the canine shall be certified by the Alliance of Therapy Dogs (ATD). Documentation of certification shall be provided to the Laboratory and retained by the Digital Evidence Section.

### **4.3 Therapy Canine Handler Responsibilities**

- 4.3.1** Assignment as a canine handler is a special assignment in addition to the regular duties required of a Forensic Scientist.
- 4.3.2** The canine handler shall complete any training necessary for certification. This includes any recurring training needed to maintain any certification obtained by the handler or canine.
- 4.3.3** Having a canine in the home requires home animal care and maintenance each day. The canine handler shall indicate time spent on home animal care and maintenance on his/her timesheet. The appropriate rate for home animal care and maintenance is thirty (30) minutes per day.
- 4.3.4** The canine handler shall not use the therapy canine for intentional breeding purposes.
- 4.3.5** The canine will be treated as a member of the Digital Evidence Section and is expected to report for duty each business day. The canine handler must ensure the canine is physically present at the Laboratory each day. In instances where the canine handler is unable to get the canine to the Laboratory, the canine handler shall notify the Forensic Scientist Manager as soon as possible.
- 4.3.6** The canine handler shall ensure the canine attends all veterinary appointments, training sessions, or other Laboratory functions at which the canine's presence is requested. If the canine is unable to meet these appointments, the canine handler shall coordinate the rescheduling of said appointments, if applicable, and notify the Forensic Scientist Manager of the Digital Evidence Section as soon as possible of the change(s).
- 4.3.7** The canine handler shall ensure the canine is up-to-date on all vaccinations and recurring medical treatments (e.g. heartworm medication).
- 4.3.8** When on duty, the canine handler shall ensure the therapy canine displays markings indicating it is a therapy canine (e.g. a vest).
- 4.3.9** If the canine handler is unable to perform the duties required of a canine handler, the canine handler shall notify the Forensic Scientist Manager of the Digital Evidence Section in writing within seven (7) days of such determination. Upon notification, the canine will be removed from the care of the handler, and the Forensic Scientist Manager of the Digital Evidence Section and the Assistant Director of Administrative Operations shall seek out a new canine handler.

### **4.4 Laboratory Responsibilities**

- 4.4.1** The Laboratory shall provide equipment to the canine handler to help facilitate a safe environment in the canine handler's home. This equipment shall include, but is not

limited to, one (1) portable crate/kennel, leashes, collars, food and water bowls, and a canine first aid kit.

- 4.4.2** Additional equipment may be purchased by the Laboratory including bowls, duty vests, cool vests, kennel pads, and muttluks (dog booties). All purchases must be approved by both the Forensic Scientist Manager of the Digital Evidence Section and Assistant Director of Administrative Operations.
- 4.4.3** All routine canine medical expenses will be paid for by the Laboratory for the life of the canine provided the canine handler remains with or has retired from the Laboratory in good standing. If extraordinary medical treatment is required, the Laboratory Director must provide approval prior to treatment.
- 4.4.4** All canine food expenses will be paid for by the Laboratory during the canine's service period. After the service period ends, the canine handler will absorb all food expenses.
- 4.4.5** Expenses associated with boarding the canine will be paid for by the Laboratory. The Laboratory shall pay for five (5) boarding instances. Any expense incurred for additional boarding instances will be the responsibility of the canine handler.
- 4.4.6** In order to ensure performance consistent with the Laboratory's criteria for casework quality, the Forensic Scientist Manager of the Digital Evidence Section shall annually evaluate the quality and quantity of the canine handler's forensic examination case work. If a deficiency is noted, the Forensic Scientist Manager shall document such deficiency and work with the canine handler to correct them. If no improvement in casework quality is seen, the Forensic Scientist Manager of the Digital Evidence Section shall notify the Laboratory Director who will determine the course of action which may include relieving the canine handler of the assignment as the therapy canine handler. The canine handler shall be notified of the removal of the assignment in writing, and documentation of the removal shall be placed in the canine handler's personnel file.

#### **4.5 Care and Maintenance of Therapy Canine**

- 4.5.1** The therapy canine shall receive proper and humane care.
- 4.5.2** The therapy canine must be clean and well-manicured in accordance with the standards for the canine's breed.
- 4.5.3** The Laboratory will identify and approve a medical care facility that will administer care to the therapy canine. The identified medical care facility will be the only medical care facility permitted to administer care to the canine. Any deviation from the approved medical care facility must be approved by the Forensic Scientist Manager of the Digital Evidence Section and the Assistant Director of Administrative Operations prior to the canine receiving medical care except in the case of medical emergencies.
- 4.5.4** The therapy dog shall have up-to-date veterinary care. A copy of the veterinary records shall be provided to the Laboratory and retained by the Digital Evidence Section.

- 4.5.5** In instances which the canine handler is on leave and is unable to care for the canine, the canine handler shall board the canine at an approved boarding facility. The boarding facility shall be identified and approved by the Laboratory.

#### **4.6 Service and Retirement of Therapy Canine**

- 4.6.1** The therapy canine shall be commissioned for service so as long as the canine's health is good for the entire service period, it is able to maintain certification as a therapy canine, and its disposition is conducive to its mission as a therapy canine.
- 4.6.2** The therapy canine shall be retired when the canine's disposition becomes non-conductive to its mission as a therapy canine, it is unable to meet its obligations to maintain certification, the canine's health becomes poor, or the canine has reached its maximum amount of handler certifications (2) and both handlers have separated from the canine.
- 4.6.3** Upon completion of the service period, the canine may become property of the canine handler or may be adopted upon approval of the Laboratory Director.
- 4.6.4** Retired canines cannot be used by the canine handler or any Laboratory personnel in any official capacity.

#### **4.7 Laboratory Access**

- 4.7.1** The therapy canine shall be restricted to the first floor and sub-level of the Raleigh Laboratory.
- 4.7.2** The therapy canine shall enter and exit through an administrative side entrance.
- 4.7.3** The therapy canine shall not have access to the Forensic Biology Section, the DNA Database Section, or the Trace Unit of the Physical Evidence Section.
- 4.7.4** Appropriate signage shall be posted at the main entrance of the Digital Evidence Section to clearly indicate the presence of the therapy canine.
- 4.7.5** The therapy canine shall display an appropriate collar, leash, harness, or vest that identifies the animal as a therapy canine.

#### **5.0 References**

Martson, H. and A. Kopicki. "The impact of service dogs on posttraumatic stress disorder in the veteran population." *The Military Psychologist* (April 2015).

Shubert, J. "Therapy Dogs and Stress Management Assistance During Disasters." *The United States Army Medical Department Journal* (April-June 2012) 74-78.

Yount, R.A, M.D. Olmert, and M.R. Lee. "Service Dog Training Program for Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress in Service Members." *The United States Army Medical Department Journal* (April-June 2012) 63-69.

North Carolina Office of State Human Resources. *NC Employees Workplace Program Requirements for Safety and Health: Animals on State Property.*

## 6.0 Records

- Canine medical records
- Canine Handler memorandums

Revision History		
Effective Date	Version Number	Reason
07/08/2016	1	Original Document.
09/22/2017	2	Document-wide – replaced “dog” with “canine,” changed “Digital/Latent Section” to “Digital Evidence Section.” 4.1 – added subsections 4.1.3 and 4.1.4 4.2 – added subsections 4.2.2 and readjusted the remaining subsections 4.3 – added all subsections 4.4 – added subsections 4.4.1 through 4.4.6 4.5 – changed title, added subsections 4.5.1, 4.5.2, 4.5.3, and 4.5.5 4.6. – changed title, added subsections 4.6.1, 4.6.2, and 4.6.3