

# Child Development Center Animals in the Classroom Policies and Procedures

Animals are allowed to visit or be housed in classrooms when:

1. The Head Start/EHS Principal/Director is notified.
2. The Animals in the Classroom procedures are followed.
3. Parents are notified and give written consent prior to housing or visitation. This consent must be unanimous.

Animals are not allowed in any classroom where a child or staff person has a health condition and exposure to the animal would put that child or staff person at risk.

**Service animals are always allowed for anyone with documented disabilities.**

The age and developmental level of the children must be considered when selecting an animal to be housed or visit the classroom.

The following animals are excluded from visiting or being housed at the Child Development Center:

- Chickens and chicks
- Ducks and ducklings
- Snakes
- Turtles
- Lizards
- Iguanas
- Frogs
- Toads
- Venomous, poisonous animals, spiders and insects
- Birds
- Wild or untrained animals
- Exotic animals such as lions, monkeys and tigers

## PROCEDURE:

### **Planning for an animal:**

- Consult with the Health Manager. She can provide you with information about the animal you are considering.
- Obtain consent form from all parents. Consent must be unanimous before the animal is housed or allowed to visit the classroom.
- For animals that are to be housed in the classroom, develop an animal care plan to include:
  1. Feeding schedule and cleaning regimen.

2. Weekend, holiday, disaster and vacation plans.
  3. Designated staff person and alternate staff person responsible for the care of the animal.
  4. Plans for disposal of the animal in the event of its death.
- Find out if any children are fearful of animals, are allergic to animals, or if an animal might trigger an asthma attack.
  - Post a hand washing procedure poster by the animal.

#### **Documentation to have on premises:**

- Name and contact information of the person responsible for the animal when class is not in session.
- Proof that dogs, cats and ferrets have been vaccinated as required by Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 826.
- Statement of health from a local veterinarian for dogs, cats, ferrets, and other animals other than small rodents, such as guinea pigs, mice, and hamsters.

#### **Once an Animal is Housed in Classroom:**

##### **Instruct children on safe procedures to follow when in close proximity to animals.**

A designated staff person must be assigned to the animal to be responsible for the care and treatment of the animal at all times, including during all Hazard Drills and disasters.

#### **Care of animals:**

1. Provide appropriate food and water.
2. Clean and disinfect animal containers and cages weekly or more often as needed.
3. Ensure all containers or cages are constructed to prevent debris from spilling out.
4. If an animal shows signs of illness, remove it from the classroom until it has been seen, treated and given approval to return to the classroom by a veterinarian.

#### **Procedure for Handling Animals:**

**Even very tame animals may react aggressively in strange situations; therefore child contact with animals should always be directly supervised by adult staff.**

1. When supervising children a staff person must be close enough to remove the child immediately if the child or animal shows signs of distress or if the child shows signs of treating the animal inappropriately.
2. Do not allow children to walk around with the animal. Handling should occur while child is seated. Animals can sustain life threatening injuries if dropped.
3. Adults and children should wash hands before and after handling animals and after touching cages/containers where the animal is kept.

## **Steps to Cleaning and Disinfecting Animal Cages/Containers:**

The area around the animal must be kept clean at all times and disinfected at least once a day or more often if necessary. **Children are not allowed to clean up any form of animal waste.**

Staff will either bring the animal to the utility sink area in the custodian closet or place the animal in a temporary cage or container and bring the cage/container to the utility sink area.

1. Wash hands and put on gloves.
2. All debris and waste must be discarded in a plastic bag, tied and placed in the garbage.
3. Clean the container/cage using soap and water.
4. Rinse the cage/container with water.
5. Disinfect using a bleach solution.
6. Air dry before returning the animal to the cage/container.
7. Clean and disinfect the utility sink.
8. Remove gloves and wash hands.
9. Return the pet to the container or cage.
10. Wash hands.

## **Death of Animal**

If the animal dies, contact the local Health Department for information about the proper disposal of its remains.