



ACTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT MANUAL; P&P: Operations		
POLICY & PROCEDURE # 1.44	DATE OF ISSUE: 1/28/2024	EFFECTIVE DATE: 2/9/2024
SUBJECT: Police Service Dog	ISSUING AUTHORITY: Chief James Cogan	
REFERENCE(S): Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission # 33.6.1; 41.1.4	___NEW __X__AMENDS ___RESCINDS	

I. POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to establish rules and regulations regarding the Acton Police Department's Police Service Dog Program. Under the guidance of the Chief of Police or their designee, the Town of Acton Police Department may employ a Police Service Dog to assist in all relevant aspects of police work.

II. DEFINITIONS

- Police Service Dog: A skillfully trained dog that partners with a handler and engages people in a calm and sociable manner. According to the Assistance Dog International (ADI) A Police Service Dog is required to:
 1. Be skilled at maintaining a calm manner and suitable social behavior in a variety of environments, and accustomed to interacting with all types of people including but not limited to children, the elderly, and those with physical and/or developmental disabilities.
 2. Demonstrate obedience skills by responding to basic commands for sitting, staying in place, laying down, walking in a controlled position near the handler, and coming to the handler when beckoned.
 3. Meet all of the ADI's and Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC) minimum standard requirements.
 4. Graduate from a program(s) that is recognized by the ADI.
- Handler: A sworn police officer employed by the Acton Police Department who meets all of the necessary qualifications to work with a Police Service Dog.

III. PROCEDURES

The primary duty of the Police Service Dog will be to assist the employees of the Acton Police Department and other various Departments within Acton in a therapeutic manner. Additional duties will include carrying out community outreach functions such as educational programming, specialized events, and community interactions. The Police

Service Dog shall be assigned to a handler. The Service Dog can also be incorporated into interaction during investigations involving children/adults to reduce anxiety and increase communication between the adult or child victim/witness and investigators, to provide comfort for people during times of crisis, and to provide aid and comfort to individuals, groups, and communities impacted by violence, tragedy or traumatic events.

The officer assigned as the Police Service Dog Handler shall be the only authorized employee to use the animal unless emergency circumstances arise. The Special Services Division Traffic/Community Relations Unit Supervisor will select the daily assignments for personnel assigned to handle a Police Service Dog. **[41.1.4 (7A)]**

In addition to their primary duty, a Police Service Dog and their handler may assist in the following circumstances: **[41.1.4 (B)(C)]**

- Employee wellness: Providing support of a therapeutic nature to First Responders, and employees of the Town of Acton.
- Additional uses for the Police Service Dog Team:
 - Aid in the investigation where there is a child victim of abuse
 - Prior to a forensic interview, the Service Dog Team may meet with the child victim/witness in the lobby or waiting area of the building where the child will be interviewed to reduce anxiety while the interviewer prepares for the interview. The Service Dog Handler will also have the opportunity to engage the child in conversation, which will help the child feel more comfortable talking to an unfamiliar adult. This interaction will also help the handler assess the child's developmental capabilities prior to the interview.
 - Forensic interview aid of a child victim, at the interviewer's discretion. This option is available if the child becomes extremely upset while away from their parent(s). If the Service Dog is used in the interview, the handler is to only perform the duties of handling the Service Dog and allow the interviewer to engage in communication with the child.
 - Trial testimony of a child victim/witness
 - Like the procedures for forensic interviews and prosecutor deployments, the Service Dog team may be used in the waiting area prior to testimony. If the presiding judge allows the Service Dog team to be deployed, the Service Dog handler will not engage in communicating with the child and only perform the necessary handler duties
 - Critical Incident Mental Health Support
 - The Service Dog Team can help bridge the gap between a traumatic event and the connection to mental health support. A compassionate presence leveraging the human-canine bond helps restore a person's emotional and cognitive equilibrium. The first contact with an impacted individual is important. If managed in a respectful and compassionate way, it can help

establish an effective helping relationship and increase the person's receptiveness to further help.

- Critical Incident Stress Management

- The Service Dog Team is authorized to aid the local Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team with debriefing or diffusing First Responders who were involved in a traumatic event within the CISM response area as requested.

- School Support

- The Service Dog team may be utilized to assist school officials during times of mental health crisis, bereavement counseling, or any other appropriate request from the local school districts.

- Community Relations

- Requests for demonstrations or visits will be routed to the Traffic/Community Relations Unit Supervisor. All requests will be made far enough in advance to ensure the availability of the Service Dog.

IV. SELECTION AND TRAINING [41.1.4(7D)]

A. Police Service Dog

The Police Service Dog must be trained by ADI-certified dog training or by other ADI or MPTC-certified training as determined by the Chief of Police, prior to the Police Service Dog assuming regular duties. [33.6.1]

A canine chosen to be a Police Service Dog must be selected based on the following criteria: temperament, medical history, breed type, age, or any other factor that is deemed suitable to the canine's specialized use. The Police Service Dog may be acquired from a breeder, shelter, or another reputable resource.

The Acton Police Department's Training Coordinator will coordinate the scheduling of any training for the department's Police Service Dog and their handler. All Training records shall be maintained and secured by the Deputy Chief.

B. Handler

The Service Dog Handler is a specialized assignment within the Acton Police Department.

Qualifications for the position of Handler will include: [41.1.4(7D)]

1. The handler must be a sworn officer who shows an earnest desire to work with a Police Service Dog and the Town of Acton community.
2. The Handler must have a demonstrated ability to engage in positive and proactive community policing strategies.

3. The Handler must be able to house the canine at their residence.
4. The ability to lift and carry the canine when needed.

The Service Dog Handler candidate shall have the following minimum training:

1. Full-Time MPTC or equivalent Police Academy
2. Mental Health First Aid; CIT training or its equivalent
3. ICS 100
4. NIMS 700

An officer assigned to a Service Dog will attend Puppies Behind Bars (PBB), or a similar ADI-approved training facility, to partake in a group class known as “Team Training” or a similar program. This training will include, at a minimum, managing assistance dog behavior, directing the dog to respond to learned commands, and assuming responsibility for maintaining the health and well-being of the dog. A Police Service Dog and their handler may also attend any approved MPTC Training approved by the Acton Police Department’s Training Coordinator. **[33.6.1]**

The Service Dog team will receive initial training and/or proficiency testing and/or re-training in accordance with a nationally recognized Service Dog organization, or other certifying association approved by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

The Service Dog team will train on a regular basis to maintain proficiency and operational readiness. Additionally, the Service Dog team will undergo a demonstration of proficiency on a yearly basis under the supervision of a nationally recognized Service Dog organization.

The Training Coordinator, or designee, will ensure that the above training is conducted as indicated and will ensure that the training records are maintained for the Service Dog team by the Training Unit.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

- Designated hours: The Police Service Dog may have specific availability to the general public at designated times and locations at the discretion of the handler.
- Tracking Police Service Dog Use: All Police Service Dog uses will be documented with an appropriate activity entry and submitted to the Special Services Division Commander on a monthly basis. **[41.1.4(7H)]**
- Identification and Uniform: The Police Service Dog handler will routinely wear the approved Patrol or Class A uniform unless otherwise authorized by the Chief of Police or his designee for special functions. The canine will wear an approved vest properly identifying it at all times while in service.

- Overtime and Special Assignments: During overtime and special assignments, it is the handler's responsibility to determine the most adequate location for the Police Service Dog.
- Special Requests for the Police Service Dog: Special requests for the Police Service Dog are the responsibility of the handler. The Police Service Dog may be requested by the general public for the specific purpose of community events with limited availability. Community requests for individual purposes will generally not be filled. Exceptions to this restriction will be made via written request to the Special Services Division Commander.

VI. VEHICLE AND BUILDING REQUIREMENTS [41.1.4(7G)]

- The handler for the Police Service Dog will be assigned a specific vehicle to transport the Police Service Dog during job-related functions. The vehicle should be a marked cruiser with ample space in the rear compartment without plastic molded seating for the Police Service Dog to be comfortable. In the event the Police Service Dog/handler needs to function in any type of patrol capacity and is subject to calls for service, the vehicle may be a K9-specific vehicle. Arrestees will not be transported with a Service Dog in the vehicle. The Police Service Dog will be permitted to roam within the Public Safety Facility.

VII. GENERAL RULES OF CONDUCT

- A. Department personnel will not tease, intimidate, or agitate the Police Service Dog.
- B. Personnel should pet the Police Service Dog at the direction of the handler. Permission and supervision of the handler should be obtained.
- C. Personnel should not feed the Police Service Dog without the permission of the handler.
- D. Personnel shall not transport the Police Service Dog unless given prior permission by the handler.
- E. Personnel will in no way indicate to the public that the Police Service Dog conducts work typically related to other specialty police service dogs such as, but not limited to, patrol, drug detection, or explosives detection. **[41.1.4(7B)]**

VIII. INJURIES

A. Police Service Dog

If a department Police Service Dog is unfit for duty because of illness or injury, the handler will inform the Shift Supervisor in a timely manner. Unless otherwise directed, the officer will report to their respective shift and/or assigned daily duties.

In the event that a department Police Service Dog becomes sick or injured to the extent that professional medical attention is required, it shall be the responsibility of the handler to transport the dog to the veterinarian.

The officer will submit a memorandum to their supervisor indicating all the circumstances surrounding the need for medical attention and the treatment received.

B. Handler

A Police Service Dog will be assigned to only one handler, will live with that handler and family, and will be provided 24-hour care. In the event the handler becomes ill, injured, or unavailable, reasonable accommodations will be made for the dog's care at the discretion of the Chief of Police. **[41.1.4(7F)]**

If the injury or illness is of a serious nature where the officer cannot continue the assignment of a dog handler, the dog will be retired or retrained with another handler, or the program discontinued. The decision will be the responsibility of the Chief of Police.

IX. PROPER CARE OF THE POLICE SERVICE DOG **[41.1.4 (7F)]**

The Police Service Dog handler is responsible for the following:

- The Police Service Dog handler shall maintain the Police Service Dog at their place of residence and shall be responsible for ensuring that the Police Service Dog is properly cared for.
- No Police Service Dog handler-related equipment, food, or medicine will be purchased without prior approval.
- The Acton Police Department will be responsible for all expenses associated with the Police Service Dog.
- The Police Service Dog handler shall make sure the Police Service Dog attends regularly scheduled health check-ups, as recommended by a veterinarian, and receives all immunizations required by Massachusetts law. The Police Service Dog handler will maintain a record of registration for the Police Service Dog as required by Massachusetts law. The Police Service Dog handler will maintain a record of all examinations, treatments, and vaccinations given to the dog.
- Whenever there is an injury to the Police Service Dog, the injury and cause of injury, if known, will be reported to the handler's supervisor as soon as possible. The Police Service Dog handler will take the Police Service Dog to the established veterinarian for treatment.
- The Police Service Dog handler will be provided the following: **[41.1.4 (7G)]**
 1. An appropriate size transportation and indoor carrier
 2. Food and other nutritional and feeding supplies

3. Medications or equipment related to veterinary care
4. Items related to training and enrichment needs
5. Other equipment as deemed suitable for the proper upkeep or general contentment of the Police Service Dog
6. (2) leashes and a collar
7. Identification vest

X. POLICE SERVICE DOG RETIREMENT

- A department Police Service Dog will be retired from service when it cannot mentally or physically perform to department and certification standards. A retired Police Service Dog may become the property of the Police Service Dog handler. In the event the Acton Police Department Police Service Dog program is discontinued, the Police Service Dog will be retired and the Chief of Police shall determine all matters pertaining to the Police Service Dog.

POLICE SERVICE DOG INFORMATION

History: None