



Fitchburg State University Police Department

Subject: Comfort Dog		<u>General Order</u> 12.5
Reference: IACLEA: N/A MPAC: 41.1.4		
Effective Date: June 22, 2022	Review Date:	
By Order of: Michael J. Cloutier, Chief of Police		

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this operation directive is to establish procedures and regulations governing the deployment, training, evaluation, and use of a Comfort Dog and define the authority, circumstances, and responsibility for their use.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Fitchburg State University Police Department that Comfort Dog(s), and their handlers, be highly trained in all related aspects of their duties thereby enhancing service to the community, members of the department, and other first responders.

PROCEDURE:

A. Uses for the Department Comfort Dog (Comfort Dog)

1. A trained Community Engagement Dog or Comfort Dog is a valuable resource in fostering dialog and communications between the department and the campus community we serve. The Comfort Dog can effectively be used by the department in Community Engagement initiatives, and internally with department members and other first-responders. Additionally, a trained Comfort Dog will provide aid and comfort for people during times of crisis, and assist individuals, groups, and communities impacted by violence, tragedy, or traumatic events.

- a. Mental Health Support

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- b. Aid in investigations by providing support to victims/witnesses.
- c. Critical Incident Stress Management
- d. Community Relations (General)
- e. The Chief of Police, or his designee, may authorize the use of the Comfort Dog for purposes not specifically outlined in this policy on a case-by-case basis.

B. Limitations on Deployment and Use

1. Only those designated as the Primary Handler will be allowed to perform any of the duties with a Comfort Dog.
2. Under no circumstances will members of the department, other than the handler, attempt to use verbal or physical commands to control the actions of the Comfort Dog.
3. No one will feed anything to the Comfort Dog without the handler's permission.
4. The Comfort Dog is not trained to defend itself or to be used for aggressive purposes. Before deploying the Comfort Dog, the location must be safe and secure for the dog and handler. The Handler of the Comfort Dog has the ultimate decision on whether to deploy the Comfort Dog based on the circumstances at the time.
5. The Comfort Dog will not be retired or destroyed without the authorization of the Comfort Dog handler/owner.

MPAC 41.1.4(a)

C. Comfort Dog Handler(s)

1. The selection of primary and secondary Comfort Dog handler(s) will be at the discretion of the Chief of Police.
2. Handler(s) must have served a minimum of one year with the Fitchburg State University Police Department and must be a sworn member of the department unless otherwise directed by the Chief of Police or his designee.
3. Handler(s) will have one (1) year of satisfactory performance evaluations along with no discipline for one year leading up to the application of the position.
4. Handlers will have a demonstrated record of positive interaction with members of the community.
5. Handler(s) will at all times use good judgment when utilizing the Comfort Dog.

MPAC 41.1.4(b)

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D. Training

1. Upon their initial selection, all Comfort Dog Teams (dog and handlers) will receive initial training and/or proficiency testing in accordance with a nationally recognized comfort/crisis dog organization, or other certifying association approved by the Chief of Police or his designee. A puppy may be used as a Comfort Dog while it is undergoing training, as long as it has been evaluated and approved by the Chief of Police, or his designee.
2. Comfort Dog Teams will train, on a regular basis to maintain proficiency and operational readiness. Additionally, the Comfort Dog Team will demonstrate proficiency on a yearly basis under the supervision of a recognized comfort/crisis dog organization, at the discretion of the Chief of Police or his designee.
3. It is mandatory that Primary Comfort Dog Handlers attend and successfully complete Crisis Intervention and De-Escalation Training.

[MPAC 41.1.4 \(b\)](#)

E. Care, Maintenance, and Transportation of Comfort Dog(s)

1. The Comfort Dog will reside with the Primary Handler. In the event that the Primary Handler cannot maintain and care for the Comfort Dog for short periods of time, i.e. vacation etc., the Comfort Dog may reside with a Secondary Handler, or with another person approved by the Chief of Police, or his designee. The Comfort Dog Supervisor will be notified in the event that the Comfort Dog will be staying with the Secondary Handler or any other person.
 - a. If the Comfort Dog is personally owned, the handler may make arrangements at his/her discretion.
2. The department shall be responsible for reasonable veterinarian treatment for an owner/handler Comfort Dog injured while being used in the performance of their duties by no fault of the handler.
3. The owner/handler shall be responsible for the cost of feeding, shelter, and upkeep of their personally owned dog. The department/university will cover the liability of the dog while it is performing official duties.
4. For department-owned and issued dogs. The handler will be responsible for the training and upkeep of the dog. The department shall be responsible for all reasonable costs associated with owning a dog, including liability, feeding, upkeep, veterinarian costs, training, kennels, equipment, and temporary shelter during the handler vacation periods.
5. The department will pay for training expenses. [MPAC 41.1.4d](#)

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6. All Comfort Dogs must be licensed, meet all health requirements, and are subjected to all laws pertaining to dogs.
7. Comfort Dog Handlers are responsible for cleaning up any mess left by their dog.
8. The handler will keep an extra key to their assigned vehicle to secure the vehicle when the A/C or heat is running for the canines' safety and comfort.
9. Anytime the general public has access to the Comfort Dog it shall be equipped and wear:
 - a. An appropriate collar and leash, no longer than 6 feet long.
 - b. A vest or harness marked "POLICE" or "COMFORT DOG"
 - c. The vest or harness may be adorned with other appropriate patches, badges, or mementos in relation to the dog's service, as approved by the Chief of Police.
10. The Comfort Dog Handler shall wear
 - a. The authorized seasonally appropriate uniform and equipment in accordance with the Fitchburg State University Police Department uniform policy.
 - b. Alternate Uniform:
 - 1) A subdued uniform that consists of tan/Khaki or dark tactical 5.11 style pants, and a department-approved collared shirt that displays an embroidered or printed badge, handcuffs and firearm may be worn if authorized by the Chief or a Lieutenant.
 - 2) All uniforms will be kept neat, clean, and properly pressed. Worn and tattered uniform components shall be replaced.
11. An appropriate safe place will be made available at the Fitchburg State University Police Department's station for securing the dog indoors. Water will be made available for the dog while being secured; the dog may not be kenneled or stored any longer than 4 hours without a break, except in cases of emergency.
12. All final scheduling for the Comfort Dog will be at the discretion of the handler. The handler will have direct communication with the Operations Lieutenant in regards to the scheduling. The handler will determine scheduling and availability for the Comfort Dog based on staffing, hours worked by the dog, and need for their attendance.
13. The following is a list of equipment required for the Comfort Dog;
 - a. Dog Leash

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- b. Required Vest
- c. Crate
- d. Dog Bed
- e. Assorted Training Toys
- f. Cruiser (outfitted with Climate Monitor & Alarm system including fan kit, window tint)

MPAC 41.1.4c

F. Reporting Procedures

1. Comfort Dog deployments will be logged as a call-for-service titled, "Comfort Dog Engagement" in the department's Computer-Aided Dispatch system.
2. The Comfort Dog handler maintains all Comfort Dog-training records. These training records will also be forwarded to the Administrative Lieutenant for entry into the Comfort Dog handler's training files.
3. If a Comfort Dog injures any person (child, suspect, citizen, or officer): It is the responsibility of the Comfort Dog handler's supervisor to investigate the report and attach all supporting documentation to a report in RMS, which is to be forwarded to the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
 - a. The handler will ensure that proper medical treatment is received by the person who was injured as soon as possible.
 - b. The handler will notify the OIC who will ensure that all appropriate reporting is completed.
4. If emergency veterinary services are required, the handler should contact the on-call lieutenant as soon as possible.

G. Disposition of Comfort Dog

1. Recommendations to remove a Comfort Dog from service for performance-related issues will be forwarded to the Chief of Police through the appropriate chain of command.
 - a. Following consultation, if necessary, with departmental staff and/or an approved trainer, the Chief of Police will make the determination as to whether the Comfort Dog should be removed from service.
2. *Employee Owned Dog:*
The University shall not retain the dog that is owned by the handler. The owner/handler can stop using the dog at any time and at their choosing, for justifiable reasons, without penalty to the handler.

University/ Department Owned Dog

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Recommendations to retire a Comfort Dog for cause will be made through the chain of command. After consultation with the departmental veterinarian and an approved trainer, the Chief of Police will make the recommendation as to whether or not the Comfort Dog may be retired to the care of the handler or stay in service. If it is determined that the Comfort Dog should be retired, the handler will have the option of adopting the dog, free of cost, for personal use.

3. In all instances where a Comfort Dog is adopted or is removed from service, the department will no longer bear responsibility for any expenses related to the care and maintenance of the dog.

4. Employee Leave:

University/ Department Owned Dog

- a.) Teams Greater than Five Years partnership:

In cases where a handler that has been teamed with a Comfort Dog for greater than five years leaves the department through resignation, injury, or retirement, the Comfort Dog shall be made available for adoption at no cost to the departing member, if so desired. If the handler declines adoption, the dog may be assigned to a new handler or be offered up for adoption to another as determined by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

- b.) Teams with less than five years' partnership:

In cases where a handler leaves the department through resignation, injury, or retirement, prior to five years of teamwork, the Comfort Dog will remain the property of the department. If the Comfort Dog is determined to be suitable for reassignment to a new handler, it shall be retained within the unit or sold to the original handler for the cost of a replacement dog. If the Comfort Dog is determined unsuitable for reassignment, the Comfort Dog shall be made available for adoption at no cost to the departing member, if so desired. If the handler declines adoption, the dog may be assigned to a new handler or be offered up for adoption to another as determined by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.

5. In cases where the University / Department discontinues the program, the Comfort Dog shall be made available for adoption at no cost to the handler, if so desired. If the handler declines adoption, the dog may be offered up for adoption to another as determined by the Chief of Police or his/her designee

Approval:



Chief of Police

06/22/22
Date