

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS Standard Operating Procedures		
Policy Name: Animal Programs		
Policy Number: 108.13	Effective Date: 02/05/2019	Page Number: 1 of 9
Authority: Commissioner	Originating Division: Inmate Services Division (Education)	Access Listing: Level I: All Access

I. Introduction and Summary:

The Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) has established offender animal programs to provide offenders with the education and training necessary to facilitate employment and successful return to the community; improve offender behavior and increase the offenders' sense of responsibility and care towards others; and to increase animal adoptions and the number of therapy and service animals available for individuals in the community who require their services. Offender animal programs shall focus on socialization and basic training for the animals to increase adoptability, or therapy and/or service training for the animals to provide assistance for program clients.

II. Authority:

GDC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): 102.01, Media Relations; and 109.01, Local Management of Volunteer Services.

III. Definitions:

- A. **Foster/Rescue Program** - A program that allows offenders to assist a Contractor in providing housing, basic training, and socialization to prepare animals for adoption.
- B. **Guide Dog Program** - A program in which offenders train dogs for the specific purpose of teaching the dogs to assist to an individual that is visually impaired.
- C. **Auburn Dog Program** - A program in which offenders train dogs for the specific purpose of detecting explosives and contraband. Offenders will reinforce the dogs' track-and-reward behavior for being successfully trained as detector dogs.
- D. **Vet Dog Program** - A program in which offenders train dogs for the specific purpose of teaching the dogs to assist with enhancing the mobility and renewing the independence of veterans, active-duty service members, and first responders with disabilities.

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- E. **Animal Shelter Detail** - A work detail in which offenders will prepare and clean indoor and outdoor animal areas as well as provide socialization for animals at animal shelters run by a Contractor.
- F. **Contractor** - Rescue organizations and Therapy/Service organizations that enter into a legally binding contract with Georgia Department of Corrections to provide an offender animal program.
- G. **Program Coordinator** - The GDC staff member designated by the Warden or Superintendent to coordinate the program with the Contractor. This staff person shall be consistently assigned to the program.
- H. **Offender-Trainer** - An offender who is chosen to assume leadership as the full-time animal trainer for the animal assigned to him/her. This offender is also known as the “Primary Handler”. If the Primary Handler is unavailable, another offender may be designated as the “Secondary Handler” of the animal and may assume responsibilities of the Primary Handler in their absence, if applicable.

IV. Statement of Policy and Applicable Procedures:

A. Establishment:

1. In conjunction with GDC central office and legal staff, a Warden/Superintendent may establish an offender animal program.
2. Foster/Rescue Programs will partner with a Contractor that is either a local or state agency or a certified non-profit organization which will be responsible for all supplies, equipment and materials needed for the animal as well as adoptions.
3. Guide Dog Program Contractor will provide the dogs, necessary veterinary care, supplies and equipment with the exception of food and grooming equipment.
4. Auburn Dog Program Contractor will provide dogs and crates only.

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5. Contractors operating therapy and/or service animal training programs shall be accredited members or candidate members in good standing of Assistance Dogs International or another nationally recognized organization with expertise in training therapy and/or service dogs.
 - a. Program Coordinators shall maintain active communication with the Contractor for the duration of the program and ensure that all Offender-Trainers comply with the Contractor's general requirements for trainers.
6. All programs will comply with SOP 109.01 (VF01-0001) Local Management of Volunteer Services.
7. Each facility will have a written memorandum of understanding or a contract in place with the Contractor operating the program. The Program Coordinator will work with the Office of Legal Services to review the content of the memo/contract and establish the scope of work for the program.

B. Responsibilities:

1. The Contractor will oversee all offender animal programs, and:
 - a. Assist with the planning and implementation of programs and act as a resource to program staff/volunteers.
 - b. Conduct regular facility visits to observe the program.
 - c. Contractors will be responsible for the acts and omissions of its staff/volunteers while they are participating in or representing the animal program.
 - d. Contractor staff will be screened per SOP 109.01 (VF01-0001), Local Management of Volunteer Services.
 - e. The Contractor's trainer, if applicable, will provide ongoing communication to the Program Coordinator, which will include, but not be limited to, review of Offender-Trainer progress and performance.

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2. The Warden/Superintendent will designate a Program Coordinator responsible for day-to-day program operations at the facility, who will:
 - a. Ensure compliance with GDC policy by facility employees, offenders and visitors involved with the program, as well as Contractor staff/volunteers.
 - b. Coordinate with GDC central office staff, the program's Contractor(s) and the Offender-Trainer(s) on program implementation and operation, including program training schedules, curriculum, and activities.
 - c. Maintain safety and security procedures governing offender participants and program animals.
 - d. Develop and publish a schedule of all program activities.
 - e. Maintain up-to-date veterinary records for the program animals on-site.
 - f. Be active in program development, implementation and daily activities.
- C. Offender Application and Screening:
1. Offenders who wish to participate in an animal program will complete a program application and applicable screening processes for the program (for example: interviews, essays, surveys, etc.)
 - a. Therapy/Service programs require that an offender have a minimum sentence of two (2) years remaining.
 - b. Therapy/Service programs require that an offender be incarcerated for one (1) year prior to consideration.
 2. Background Review:
 - a. Criminal History;

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i. Offenders with convictions of a sexual nature, cruelty to animals and/or egregious assaultive charges/histories are generally excluded from acceptance into an animal program. Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Warden/designee, Program Coordinator, and Contractor.

b. Review of Institutional/Disciplinary Record.

3. Suggested Interview Board:

a. Warden/Superintendent or designee;

b. Program Coordinator;

c. Contractor Representative, if applicable; and

d. Counselor.

D. Offender Participants:

1. All offender program assignments will be voluntary.

2. Offenders accepted into the program are required to comply with the terms of the facility's contract with the Contractor and facility regulations.

3. All selected offenders must sign Attachment 1, Animal Program Waiver of Liability Form, prior to any animal contact.

4. Prior to handling animals, offenders will participate in an orientation of appropriate care of animals.

5. In the event of observed or alleged mistreatment of an animal, security protocol and policies will be followed in accordance with GDC policy.

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E. Volunteers:

1. Volunteers, including facility employees volunteering on-site with the program while off the clock, will be screened per SOP 109.01 (VF01-0001) Local Management of Volunteer Services.
2. All participating volunteers, including employees, must sign Attachment 1, Animal Program Waiver of Liability Form, prior to any animal contact.

F. Program Animals:

1. All animals entering the program will be the property and responsibility of the Contractor. Animals owned by staff must be approved by the Warden/Superintendent and Program Coordinator, if applicable.
 - a. The Georgia Department of Corrections will not be liable for any accidental injury or health-related issues of the animal while on facility grounds.
 - b. All animals must be in the care of the Contractor for an approved amount of time prior to transfer to a facility.
2. Before entering the facility, each animal will be screened for:
 - a. Health and physical condition:
 - i. All animals must be current on all required vaccinations and have documentation to show it.
 - ii. Animals with special needs must be approved in advance by the Program Coordinator.
 - b. Temperament, including issues that might cause injuries to employees, program staff/volunteers, or offenders;
 - c. Ability to accept socialization and training; and

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- d. Adoptability after program completion.
3. Spaying and Neutering:
 - a. All Foster/Rescue Program animals shall be spayed or neutered a minimum of one (1) week prior to placement in a facility.
 - b. Therapy/Service and Auburn Program dogs will be at the discretion of the Contractor with approval from the facility.
 4. Transportation of Animals: With the exception of emergency situations, animals will be transported as needed in vehicles owned and operated by the Contractor.
 - a. Program Coordinator will facilitate transport.
 - b. In the event of an emergency, the GDC facility is responsible for carrying out the facility evacuation plan or process.
 5. The Warden/Superintendent, Program Coordinator, and Contractor may approve, deny, and/or remove any animal entering/participating in the program.
 6. Adoption/Final Placement: The Contractor will have sole responsibility for the adoption or other final placement of all animals in the program.
- G. Sanitation: Offenders assigned to animal programs are responsible for the overall cleanliness and sanitation of the animals' living quarters and outside training/relief areas.
1. Inside Facility Living Area:
 - a. Solid waste and urine will be removed/mopped up immediately and the area cleaned and disinfected.

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- b. Animal living quarters will be inspected and cleaned by the assigned offenders on a daily basis.
 - c. Animal food and water bowls will be cleaned a minimum of one time daily by the assigned offenders.
2. Outside Training/Animal Relief Areas
- a. Solid waste will be immediately picked up following appropriate procedures and disposed of in an approved receptacle.

H. Emergency Procedures:

- 1. The Program Coordinator will ensure that a current emergency contact list for the animals in the program is maintained at all times. It will include:
 - a. Contact information for the Program Coordinator/designee, Contractor, Contractor's trainer, and program staff/volunteers.
- 2. Each program will develop written emergency procedures to address:
 - a. Any injury to any individual by an animal will be reported immediately to the nearest staff member/supervisor.
 - i. Any offender injured while participating in an animal program will be seen by on-site medical staff;
 - ii. An Incident Report with witness statements will be completed; and
 - iii. In instances of an animal bite, the incident will be reviewed by the Warden/Superintendent, Program Coordinator and Contractor to determine if the bite was an aggressive act which may warrant removal from the program.
 - b. Health related emergencies involving an animal:

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- i. Immediately notify the Emergency Contact person for the Contractor;
- ii. Notify the Warden/Superintendent; and
- iii. Notify the Program Coordinator.

I. **Press/Media:** The Contractor must have prior written approval from GDC Public Affairs for any social media postings, publications, advertisements, media contact, or public information that relates to an offender animal program, collectively called “material”, excepting that material which deals solely with dog adoption promotions. (Refer to Attachment 1 of SOP 102.01, Media Relations, the Interview Request Form.)

V. Attachments:

Attachment 1: Animal Program Waiver of Liability Form

VI. Record Retention of Forms Relevant to this Policy:

Upon completion, by an offender, Attachment 1 shall be placed in the offender’s institutional file and maintained according to the official retention schedule for that file. Upon completion, by an employee or volunteer, the form will be retained at the facility for five (5) years and then shall be destroyed.