



MEDFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT

General Order 1.20

COMFORT DOG PROGRAM

MASSACHUSETTS POLICE ACCREDITATION
STANDARDS
REFERENCED: NONE

ISSUING AUTHORITY:

Michelle Guerette
Chief of Police

DATE OF ISSUE:

06/19/2024

EFFECTIVE DATE:

06/19/2024

END DATE:

06/19/2026

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 Medfield Police Department that Comfort Dog, and its handler, 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 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

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 Select Board. 41.1.4(a)

C. Comfort Dog Handler(s)

1. The selection of primary and/or secondary Comfort Dog handler(s) will be at the discretion of the Chief of Police.
 2. Handler(s) must be a sworn member of the department unless otherwise directed by the Chief of Police or his designee.
 3. Handlers will have a demonstrated record of positive interaction with members of the community.
 4. Handler(s) will at all times use good judgment when utilizing the Comfort Dog.
- 41.1.4(b)

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.

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.

2. 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.

3. The department will pay for training expenses. 41.1.4d

4. All Comfort Dogs must be licensed, meet all health requirements and are subjected to all laws pertaining to dogs.

5. All handlers are responsible for cleaning up any mess left by their dog.

6. Comfort Dog Handlers are responsible for their assigned vehicle to secure the vehicle when it is running the A/C or heat for the canines' safety and comfort. The handler will keep an extra key for such purposes.

7. 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. A vest or harness with other appropriate patches, badges, as approved by the Chief of Police.

8. The Comfort Dog Handler shall wear:

9. An appropriate safe place will be made available at the public Safety Complex for securing the dog indoors if needed. Water will be made available and the dog shall not be kenneled for a period of longer than 4 hours without a break unless an emergency situation exists..

10. Scheduling of events and assignments will be made at the discretion of the Chief of Police. The handler shall advise the Chief of police of any issues related to training conflict or extended hours that may impact the safety of the dog.

11. The following is a list of equipment required for the Comfort Dog:

- a. Leash
- b. Vest
- c. Crate
- d. Dog Bed
- e. Assorted Training toys
- f. Cruiser equipped with climate control, alarm system and window tint

F. Reporting Procedures

1. Comfort Dog deployments will be logged into CAD as calls for service titled, "Comfort Dog Engagement."
2. The Comfort Dog Handler is responsible for maintaining all training records which will be forwarded to the Deputy Chief for placement in the training files.
3. In the event the Comfort Dog injures any person, (citizen, child or officer), it is the responsibility of the Handler to notify a supervisor to investigate.

Both the OIC and Handler shall complete a report of the incident in the RMS, which will be forwarded to the Deputy Chief.

- a. The Handler will ensure that proper medical treatment is provided to any injured party as soon as practicable.
- b. In the event the Comfort Dog becomes ill or injured, the Handler will immediately notify the OIC and seek emergency medical veterinary treatment.

G. Disposition of the Comfort Dog

1. Recommendations to remove the Comfort Dog from service for performance related issues shall be forwarded to the Chief of Police through the proper chain of command.
 - a. Following consultation, if necessary, with departmental staff, approved trainer, and/or Veterinarian, the Chief of Police will make a determination as to whether the Comfort Dog shall be removed from service.
2. Recommendations to retire the dog from service for performance related issues, illness, separation of the handler and the department or retirement, shall be made to the Chief of Police. The Comfort Dog remains the property of the Town of Medfield and shall only be released by the Select Board. The Select Board may re-assign the dog to another community, transfer the dog to another handler or make other arrangements for adoption as it deems suitable.

H. K-9 Vehicle

1. The department will provide a police vehicle. The handler will be responsible for cleanliness and general maintenance. 41.1.4(d)
2. At a minimum the K9 vehicle will be equipped with a kennel, K9 heat alarm, engine run system, and proper equipment storage.
3. The use of the vehicle will be at the discretion of the Chief of Police.
4. When the handler is off duty, the vehicle shall be secured and legally parked at the residence of the handler.
5. The use of the vehicle for private or personal reasons is prohibited.

6. Canine vehicles may be taken to details only when the dog is present, and the handler has immediate access to the vehicle. Special considerations are to be given to the dog's well-being, considering such factors as weather conditions and the handler's availability to get the dog out for relief.
7. Handlers will report any cruiser and equipment deficiencies immediately to the Deputy Chief and fleet manager.
8. Canine vehicles may be used for:
 - a. Attending trainings
 - b. Court appearances
 - c. Veterinary visits
 - d. Request for service by outside agencies with the prior approval of the Chief of Police

