

CHARLOTTESVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT



Note: This directive is for internal use only and does not enlarge an officer's liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense with respect to third party claims. Violations of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by the Charlottesville Police Department and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

Type of Directive: GENERAL ORDER	Number: 26-20
COMFORT CANINE	Date: 02/06/2020
VLEPSC Number: N/A	Manual Number: 539.21
	Effective Date: 02/06/2020
Authorization: Chief R.M. Brackney <i>Rm Brackney</i>	Follow-up: As Needed

I. POLICY

It is the policy of the Charlottesville Police Department to provide guidelines for the proper usage, care, management and control of the Departments Comfort Canine.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Comfort Canine is to establish procedure and regulations governing the deployment, training, evaluation, and use of the Comfort Canine and define authority, circumstances, and responsibility for their use and care.

A. DEFINITIONS

Comfort Canine: The Comfort Canine is a Canine that is trained in providing stress-relieving services to officers, children and victims of crimes who have gone through a traumatic event.

B. PROCEDURES

1. A Comfort Canine Handler will be chosen by the Chief of Police after a request is sent out department wide asking for volunteers interested in being a Comfort Canine Handler.

2. When not engaged in training or animal maintenance, the primary Comfort Canine Handler will utilize the Comfort Canine in activities including but not limited to:

- a. engaging with students in the Charlottesville City Schools system;
- b. arranging times for officers to engage with the dog;
- c. attending Charlottesville Police Department-sanctioned events with the department and/or community;
- d. engaging with victims of crime during criminal investigations such as CPD investigations, missing persons, sex crimes, child abductions, child exploitation and internet crimes to help victims feel more at ease while speaking about their situation; and,
- e. providing public education about the Comfort Canine Program through community relations demonstrations.

i. requests for demonstrations will be routed to the Comfort Canine

handler(s) supervisor. All requests will be made far enough in advance to ensure that a Comfort Canine will be available. If there is a need for a short notice demonstration, approval via telephone by either the Comfort Canine Handler(s) supervisor or the Field Operations Division Commander will suffice.

ii. demonstrations may be given at any location, however, the Comfort Canine Handler(s) supervisor will have the final determination regarding the site chosen.

C. RESPONSIBILITY/ MAINTENANCE

1. The primary handler of the Comfort Canine shall be responsible for the majority of the maintenance and housing for the dog. If the primary handler is unable to care for the dog due to an illness, vacation, or other unspecified matter, the secondary handler will assume the primary handler's responsibilities.

D. TRAINING

1. Comfort Canine teams will receive initial certification and/or re-training in accordance with a nationally registered therapy dog organization or any certifying association approved by the Chief of Police or their designee.
2. Comfort Canine teams will train on a regular basis to maintain proficiency and operational readiness. Additionally, the Comfort Canine team(s) will undergo a demonstration of proficiency on a yearly basis under the supervision of a nationally registered therapy dog organization.
3. The Field Operations Division Commander will ensure that the above training is conducted as indicated and will ensure that the training records are maintained for each Comfort Canine Team by the Training Bureau.

E. REPORTING PROCEDURES

1. Usage of the Comfort Canine will be documented on a monthly basis by the handler to the handlers supervisor and forwarded to the Filed Operations Division Commander.
2. If a therapy dog bites any person (child, suspect, citizen, or officer) the handler shall ensure that proper medical treatment is received by the person who was bitten as soon as possible.
3. The handler will notify the handler's supervisor immediately.
4. The handler and their supervisor shall examine all injuries. All injuries will be photographed (when applicable), regardless of the suspected nature of the injury. Photos will be submitted with the Incident Case Report, Risk Management forms,

and any other documenting requirements. It is the responsibility of the handler's supervisor to complete the report and attach all supporting documentation, which is to be forwarded through the chain of command.

5. In the event of a dog bite when the handler's supervisor is off-duty, the on-duty patrol supervisor will be notified and will complete supporting documentation, which will be forwarded to the handler's supervisor for review.

F. VEHICLES

1. A sworn-officer will use modified department issued vehicles for transporting the therapy dog **if deemed necessary**. A civilian employee, identified as a handler, will use their personal vehicle for transport and will be provided appropriate equipment for safe transportation. Handlers may carry refreshments for the Comfort Canine in the vehicle. Handlers will report any maintenance deficiencies immediately to the handler's supervisor. Due to the fact there is no heat sensor provided in the vehicle, at no time shall the Comfort Canine be in the vehicle unaccompanied. The Comfort Canine will accompany the handler at all times.

G. RETIRING A COMFORT CANINE

1. Recommendations to retire a Comfort Canine for cause will be made through the chain of command. After consultation with the departmental veterinarian and an approved trainer, the Chief will make the recommendation as to whether or not the Comfort Canine may be retired to the care of the handler or stay in service. If it is determined that the Comfort Canine should be retired, the handler may be required to purchase the therapy dog at a cost determined by the Chief, if so desired.
2. In cases where a handler leaves, the Comfort Canine will remain the property of the department. If the canine is determined to be suitable for reassignment to a new handler, it shall be retained within the department. If the canine is determined unsuitable for reassignment, the canine shall be made available for purchase to the departing member if so desired.