



House Bill No. 6465

Public Act No. 13-114

AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL THERAPY.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2013*) (a) For purposes of this section, "animal-assisted therapy" means goal-directed intervention in which animals are used as an integral part of the crisis response process to aid individuals who have experienced mental, physical or emotional trauma; "animal-assisted therapy community" means the local or regional entities capable of providing animal-assisted therapy to individuals within the state; and "animal-assisted activity organization" means any entity involved in training, evaluating and registering members of the animal-assisted therapy community.

(b) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children and Families shall, within available appropriations, develop and implement training for certain employees of the Department of Children and Families and mental health care providers on (1) the healing value of the human-animal bond for children, (2) the value of therapy animals in dealing with traumatic situations, and (3) the benefit of an animal-assisted therapy program.

(c) Not later than January 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children and Families, in consultation with the Commissioner of Agriculture

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and within available appropriations, shall identify a coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team. Such team shall consist of various handlers and canines that have been trained, evaluated and registered by an animal-assisted activity organization to provide aid to individuals during and after traumatic events. Such team shall operate on a volunteer basis and shall be available to provide animal-assisted therapy within twenty-four hours of receiving notice to do so.

(d) Not later than July 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Children and Families, in consultation with the Governor's Prevention Partnership and the animal-assisted therapy community, shall, within available appropriations, develop a crisis response program utilizing the services of the coordinated volunteer canine crisis response team identified pursuant to subsection (c) of this section to provide animal-assisted therapy to children and youths living with trauma and loss.

Approved June 6, 2013