



Courthouse Facility Dog Resolution of the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys

The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA) is a national association dedicated to supporting and enhancing prosecutors in their efforts to create safer communities. APA supports the use of facility dogs as a model practice for providing quiet companionship to vulnerable individuals during the investigation and prosecution of crimes and other stressful legal proceedings.

Courthouse facility dogs are professionally trained dogs, whose purpose is to provide a calming influence and emotional support to victims, witnesses and children. These programs make a substantial difference in the work done by criminal justice system practitioners and the people that they serve. Due to the success of these programs, more prosecutors' offices and judicial systems are recognizing the importance of courthouse facility dogs and their impact. Since 2004, prosecutors, Children's Advocacy Centers, law enforcement departments, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) programs, and family courts have established facility dog programs which include over 180 facility dogs working in 35 states and in Chile and Canada.

As the number of courthouse facility dogs continues to grow, APA has created the following guidelines as model practices in the use of facility animals:

- 1. The facility dog should be a graduate from an assistance dog organization that is a member of Assistance Dogs International or a comparable organization whose main purpose is to grant accreditation to assistance dog organizations based on standards of excellence in assistance dog acquisition, training of the dogs and their handlers, and their placement with working professionals to enhance the services that they provide and ongoing training to support the handlers.*
- 2. The facility dog's handler should be trained by the assistance dog organization that placed the facility dog and should be someone with professional training and experience working in the legal system such as a victim advocate, investigator, forensic interviewer or other individuals that a prosecutor's office deems appropriate.*

This resolution was approved by the APA Board of Directors on February 7, 2018.