

Schools are increasingly looking for ways to support the social-emotional growth of students. Dogs can be one tool to help create and sustain healthy learning environments.

Facility Dogs are working dogs specifically trained to help more than one person in facilities like schools or hospitals. Unlike Assistance Dogs that serve one person, Facility Dogs work with a handler to serve multiple people who need social interaction, recovery motivation, comfort, and/or a feeling of safety. Dogs are at the forefront of these interventions providing a bridge for students and staff who have challenges in difficult emotional situations.

Paws With A Cause has trained Assistance Dogs for people with disabilities for 43 years. Throughout this time, we have provided more than 3,000 Assistance Dogs to people in 33 states. In 1986 PAWS helped create Assistance Dogs International (ADI), a worldwide coalition of organizations that train Assistance Dogs. ADI establishes and promotes standards of excellence in all areas of Assistance Dog acquisition, training, and partnership. Every five years PAWS completes a rigorous, peer-reviewed accreditation process through ADI. The ADI Standards process evaluates the quality of assistance dog programs and determines if a program is meeting all the criteria and requirements that represent these standards. PAWS has maintained this strict accreditation since its inception.

With all this knowledge and experience PAWS is well suited to train and provide Facility Dogs to meet the growing need for them in schools, hospitals, and other community service agencies.

- Paws Facility Dogs are specifically selected based on their temperament and love of working with people. They have a safe and steady personality. They also have the desired suitability for work in public spaces for a variety of applications including, but not limited to therapy and comfort with school counselors and teachers, medical and group home care giving, and police department crisis response teams.
- Following our model for custom placements of dogs, PAWS staff meets with the school staff and the person who will be the dog's primary handler to learn about the student body, the school's needs, and the individual school environment. Using this site visit and information from the application, PAWS custom-selects a dog that will fit the school and the dog handler. The handler is the person that the dog will work with at the school. In some cases, that handler also takes care of the dog, and it lives with them outside of the school.
- The dog will be approximately 18 to 24 months of age and have completed PAWS' foster puppy obedience and public access training, as well as advanced training in the PAWS Prison Partners



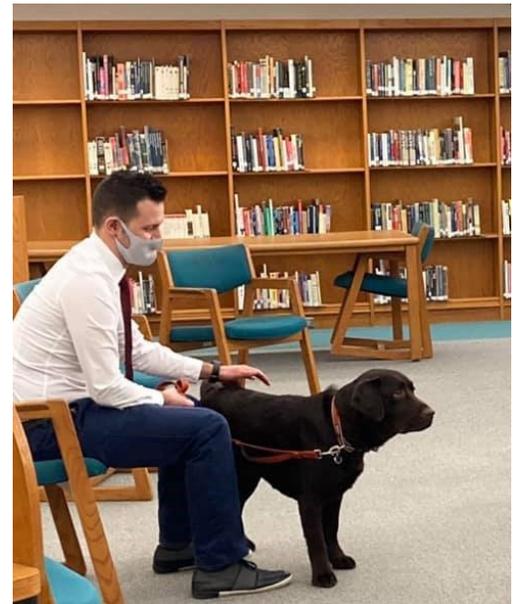
*MAPLE and students at an elementary school*

Program. Upon returning from prison the dog will be assessed for fit in the Facility Dog program. In addition, it will receive an average of eight additional weeks of assessment and training.

- A PAWS Field Representative will then be assigned to the placement school, who will support the new team. Over the course of eight to twelve weeks, the Field Representative will meet with the dog's handler and the dog both privately and in the school setting to provide on-site placement support. The Field Representative helps the handler learn to work with the dog and to integrate the dog into the school community. When ready, the team will be tested and certified by PAWS to help ensure the Facility Dog Team has the skills and temperament for this working placement.
- The cost of a Facility Dog is \$6,000. Some schools have received donations from families or supporters of their school to purchase their dog.

PAWS has placed over 30 Facility Dogs and each facility is reporting success. The principal of an elementary school remarked about their PAWS Facility Dog, "MAPLE was the thing our school always needed that we never knew we needed." A high school student in a different district reported "DUBLIN is kinda there no matter what. He doesn't care how old you are. Like what your opinions are. He's just there to listen. It's easier to deal with the school part. Obviously, the world is still hard. He's not very much help with that. But the being here is easier."

This success has inspired PAWS to work towards serving entire school districts with Facility Dogs. Our near future goal is to have five school districts with a PAWS Facility Dog in each of their school buildings. Serving entire school districts will allow PAWS to have a larger presence in the community, provide deeper support to the Teams, and potentially create a Critical Incident Response protocol for the Teams to enact if needed.



*DUBLIN and his handler at school*

Paws With A Cause exists to create opportunities for people to live with dignity, companionship, and confidence. Our Facility Dog program allows us to create this opportunity for hundreds more people with each dog. This program is a natural extension of what our organization already does, and we are extremely proud of the initial success.

For more information, please contact Mike Hanna, Canine Dog Flow and Prison Partners Manager, at 616-877-7297, Ext. 418 or [mhanna@pawswithacause.org](mailto:mhanna@pawswithacause.org).

To apply for a Facility Dog, please go to <https://www.pawswithacause.org/facility-dogs/>.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Michele Suchovsky.

Michele Suchovsky  
CEO