

Agreement Between the Merrimack Police Department and the Merrimack School District Regarding the Introduction of a Drug Sniffing Dog into Merrimack High School and Merrimack Middle School

Introduction:

The Merrimack Police Department (MPD) and the Merrimack School District (MSD) enjoy a strong and cooperative partnership. This partnership includes the longstanding presence in the schools of School Resource Officers (SROs), active participation of MPD officers in school activities, and a close and productive working relationship regarding matters involving substance use and abuse in the schools. This long term, and tested, partnership serves both entities well as we contemplate the use of a K9 in the schools for drug detection purposes.

Purpose of K9:

Both the Merrimack Police Department and the Merrimack School District agree that cooperation between both entities in the on-going campaign to address substance misuse in our schools is the most likely way to productively engage on this issue. Both entities agree that the use of available tools in the campaign to address substance misuse in the schools is in the interest of school safety and student wellness. The introduction of a K9 in the schools is one more tool that can be employed in this effort.

Plan:

The Merrimack Police Department and the Merrimack School District strongly agree that student and community education about the use of this tool before it is initially employed builds on the important trust that exists between administration and the students. Prior to the initial introduction of the K9, middle school and high school administrators will provide information to students and parents about the use of the K9, the purpose this tool is intended to serve, and the manner in which it will be employed both initially and subsequent to the initial introduction.

Agreement Concerning Outcome:

The Merrimack Police Department and the Merrimack School District have already established protocols to address instances in which illegal substances are discovered on school property. The introduction of the K9 poses no fundamental shift in the implementation of these protocols. These protocols include an agreement that school administration will initially address all discoveries of illegal substances and will employ existing rules and regulations in assessing consequences. As determined by the administration, certain occasions may warrant consultation with SROs and may result in an escalation of consequences as a result of that consultation. In cases where the discovery of illegal substances is of such a magnitude or of such character that administration determines a need to immediately escalate to the MPD, the MPD may assess the need for a police response.

In all cases, both the Merrimack Police Department and the Merrimack School District agree that the primary goal when addressing issues of substance misuse, including the discovery of illegal substances discovered during the conduct of a K9 search, is education and, where appropriate, referral to agencies and programs that offer rehabilitation and recovery opportunities. Escalation to legal entities, such as the courts, is the determination of the MPD in consultation with the MSD and school authorities, and will be guided by the nature of the discovery and informed by a goal to provide support and recovery options whenever and wherever possible and legally permissible.

This agreement is subject to annual review by the district administration and the Merrimack School Board.