

HISD PRESS RELEASE

Comfort dog joins HISD Police Department

June 16, 2021 – When Houston Independent School District students begin summer school there will be a new comfort dog available to help them beat stress and bond with police officers.

[Photo of Comfort Dog Jamaica](#)

“We have noticed a lot of grief and anxiety cases that came with COVID-19,” said HISD social and emotional learning crisis response team member Joanna Subias.

She believes the comfort dog will help kids who are transitioning from virtual to in-person education.

HISD Police Chief Pete Lopez says the dog will also build trust between students, community members and police officers.

“This is one of my efforts to help bring us closer to the community,” said Chief Lopez. “Students see the dog and not the police officer. It helps everyone feel at ease.”

The hypoallergenic Bernedoodle is a special breed that has Bernese Mountain Dog and Poodle parents. She is currently named Jamaica, but Chief Lopez says students will participate in a contest to rename the pup this fall.

It will take a year for Jamaica to become certified and accustomed to her handler. Currently, she is in the initial stages of her training.

HISD’s Social and Emotional Learning Department already has two therapy dogs. The highly trained Luci, and a therapy dog in training named Omie help provide therapeutic interventions for students experiencing trauma, grief, anxiety, and mental health issues.

Jamaica is the HISD Police Department’s first comfort dog.

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The Houston Independent School District is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States, with 280 schools and more than 209,772 students. The 333-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area, with more than 27,000 employees.

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