



Virginia Department of Planning and Budget Economic Impact Analysis

6 VAC 20-105 Rules Relating to the Compulsory Minimum Training Standards for Detector Canine Handlers Employed by the Department of Corrections; Standards for the Training and Retention of Detector Canines used by the Department of Corrections Department of Criminal Justice Services

Town Hall Action/Stage: 5724 / 11144 Proposed

July 9, 2026

The Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) has analyzed the economic impact of this proposed regulation in accordance with § 2.2-4007.04 of the Code of Virginia (Code) and Executive Order 17. The analysis presented below represents DPB's best estimate of the potential economic impacts as of the date of this analysis.¹

Summary of the Proposed Amendments to Regulation

Pursuant to Chapter 535 of the 2020 *Acts of Assembly* (Chapter 535),² the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) proposes to establish training and performance standards for detector canines and their handlers at the Department of Corrections (DOC).

Background

According to DCJS, canines are used to patrol state prisons and other facilities; to search mail and prison cells as they can sniff out contraband such as drugs, even cell phones; and to mantrail.³ At the beginning of a 12-week initial training (consisting of four ten-hour days per week), a canine and a handler are paired and go through the training together. After the initial certification, 16 hours of training per month are provided.

¹ See Code § 2.2-4007.04 (A).

² <https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+CHAP0535>

³ According to the American Kennel Club, mantrailing is when "Dogs learn to seek out an individual's scent from skin rafts (dead or dying cells) that naturally shed from the body. Before the exercise begins, the dog will sniff an article that the person has touched. They then follow the trail on a long leash attached to a harness, aiming to locate that person." See <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/sports/mantrailing-for-the-scent-driven-dog/>.

DCJS also reports that following the passage of Chapter 535, the agency worked with subject matter experts and DOC personnel and developed the regulatory text establishing training rules for canines and their handlers in its current proposed form as of March 17, 2022. Among other items, the proposed regulation addresses the approval authority; applicability of standards; training attendance and testing; administrative requirements; and consequences of non-compliance with the rules. This proposal also includes a document incorporated by reference that provides detailed information on performance outcomes, training objectives, criteria, lesson guidance, recording and reporting performance data, etc.

According to DCJS, since 2022, training academies and DOC canine handlers have been following the same proposed standards in this action even though the regulation has not been finalized. In essence, the proposed standards have been followed in practice since 2022.

Estimated Benefits and Costs

The main impact of the proposal is that the regulatory text would incorporate in the Virginia Administrative Code the legislatively mandated training rules for DOC canines and their handlers that have been followed since 2022. It is noted that prior to the legislation, DOC already had a detector canine unit and some training was already conducted albeit without uniform standards. In that sense, it appears that the legislation has ensured consistency in training of detector canines and their handlers. DCJS states that standardized training and certification requirements help demonstrate that canine deployments are conducted according to recognized professional standards, reducing the risk of legal challenges or allegations of improper practices.

Businesses and Other Entities Affected

The DOC canine unit has 81 patrol positions (currently 56 filled); 56 detection positions (currently 42 filled); and 8 mantrailing positions (currently 7 filled). The unit has 122 active canines and 10 retired that DOC continues to care for. On average, approximately 20-25 canines per year are trained, which sometimes include other law enforcement agency teams. No regulated entity appears to be disproportionately affected.

The Code requires DPB to assess whether an adverse impact may result from the proposed regulation.⁴ An adverse impact is indicated if there is any increase in net cost or reduction in net benefit for any entity, even if the benefits exceed the costs for all entities

⁴ See Code § 2.2-4007.04 (D).

combined.⁵ As noted above, the proposal would incorporate the training rules already followed in the Virginia Administrative Code. Thus, no adverse impact is indicated.

Small Businesses⁶ Affected:⁷

The proposed amendments do not adversely affect small businesses.

Localities⁸ Affected⁹

The proposed amendments do not introduce costs for localities, nor do they disproportionately affect any locality.

Projected Impact on Employment

The proposed amendments do not appear to affect employment.

Effects on the Use and Value of Private Property

No effects on the use and value of private property nor on real estate development costs are expected.

⁵ Statute does not define “adverse impact,” state whether only Virginia entities should be considered, nor indicate whether an adverse impact results from regulatory requirements mandated by legislation. As a result, DPB has adopted a definition of adverse impact that assesses changes in net costs and benefits for each affected Virginia entity that directly results from discretionary changes to the regulation.

⁶ Pursuant to § 2.2-4007.04 of the Code of Virginia, small business is defined as “a business entity, including its affiliates, that (i) is independently owned and operated and (ii) employs fewer than 500 full-time employees or has gross annual sales of less than \$6 million.”

⁷ See Code § 2.2-4007.04 (A.2). and Code § 2.2-4007.1 (C).

⁸ “Locality” can refer to either local governments or the locations in the Commonwealth where the activities relevant to the regulatory change are most likely to occur.

⁹ Code § 2.2-4007.04 defines “particularly affected” as bearing disproportionate material impact.