

BOARD ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE	
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE	ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NUMBER
<b>Service Animals in Schools</b>	<b>706 (New)</b>
<i>Directional Policy</i>	
<b>Equity and Inclusive Education</b>	

**TITLE OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE:**

Service Animals in Schools

**DATE APPROVED:**

November, 2019

**PROJECTED REVIEW DATE:**

November 2024

**DIRECTIONAL POLICY ALIGNMENT:** Equity and Inclusive Education

The Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board recognizes that all people are created equal, in the image of God, each with inimitable characteristics deserving of dignity. (Genesis: 1:27). The Board also recognizes, like St. Francis, an appreciation for all living creatures in the communion that exists between all of God’s Creation (Laudato Si).

In the context of this landscape, the Board will provide a learning environment which supports and enables diversity within its Catholic community. The Board recognizes that Board policies, programs, guidelines and practices, shared and committed leadership, engaged school-home-community relationships, inclusive curriculum and assessment practices, provision of religious accommodations, a positive school climate, professional learning, accountability and transparency are key to establishing and maintaining an equitable and inclusive learning environment.

The Board recognizes that the school system gives pre-eminence to the tenets of the Catholic faith, congruent with the protection afforded in the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Constitution Act, 1982, and confirmed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

**ALIGNMENT WITH MULTI-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The Service Animals in Schools Administrative Procedure supports our Vision for achieving excellence in Catholic Education: Learn, Lead, Serve. The Board is committed to the learning of all students and provides a range of differentiated placements, programs and interventions to support student success.



## Strategic Priorities 2017-2020

### Vision

Achieving Excellence in Catholic Education  
LEARN • LEAD • SERVE

### Mission

To educate students in faith-filled, safe, inclusive Catholic learning communities by nurturing the mind, body and spirit of all.

### LEARN

Achieve excellence in instruction and assessment to enable all students to become reflective, self-directed, lifelong learners.

### LEAD

Foster critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication, to enable all students to realize their God-given potential.

### SERVE

Inspire engagement and commitment to stewardship for creation to enable all students to become caring and responsible citizens.

## 1.0 PURPOSE:

It is the policy of the Board in accordance with its obligations pursuant to the Ontario *Human Rights Code* to provide individualized accommodation to students with disabilities to enable them to have meaningful access to education services in a manner that respects their dignity, maximizes integration and facilitates the development of independence.

The process of accommodation shall also consider the competing human rights of staff and other students; the impact of the Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal on the learning environment; and the health and safety of all individuals who are or might be in the school, on school grounds, or at a school-related event.

The Board utilizes a variety of placements, differentiated programming, and evidence-based interventions and strategies to provide meaningful access to education for students who have disability-related needs that impact their learning.

The Board does not provide Guide Dogs, Service Dogs or Service Animals to students.

**The Board encourages any family considering the purchase of a Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal to meet with the school principal or superintendent before making any commitment.**

## 2.0 BACKGROUND:

The term Service Animal is used in the *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service* made under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*, to describe an animal that assists an individual with a disability to be able to access goods and services available to the public. **A school is not a public space and is not generally accessible to the public. The AODA does *not* apply to a student's use of a Service Dog / Service Animal when accessing education services in school buildings.**

Service animals have traditionally been highly trained dogs that assist individuals with various tasks of daily living (Guide Dog, Hearing and Signal Dogs, Mobility Assistance Dogs, Seizure Response Dogs).

In most circumstances, a Guide Dog will be a highly trained dog provided to support the orientation and mobility needs of a student Handler who has a diagnosis of blindness/low vision, and the Guide Dog will provide the student Handler with greater independence, dignity and opportunity for integration.

Pursuant to the Ontario Human Rights *Code* it is possible that a Service Animal might include different species that provide a therapeutic function (e.g. horses), emotional support, sensory function, companionship and/or comfort.

## 3.0 ACTION REQUIRED:

This Administrative Procedure identifies the individualized process to be followed when a parent/guardian or adult student applies to the School Board to have a Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal accompany the student while the student is attending school or a school-related event.

In circumstances where a parent or adult student requests to have the student's Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal accompany the student while attending school or a school-related event, each such request shall be reviewed individually by the Board considering the student's dignity, integration, independence and disability-related learning needs and the accommodations available to enable meaningful access to education prior to a service animal accommodation.

Such a decision will consider that all animals approved for assistance in schools must be trained by an accredited training organization, and animals other than dogs, are not trained by an Accredited Training Organization and may pose a risk to the safety of students and staff and/or may be disruptive to the learning environment and/or may act as a distraction in the learning environment.

Due to risks to safety, and risks of disruption and distraction in the learning environment, the School Board does ***not*** permit training of potential guide dogs and service dogs in the school setting or during school activities.

A regulated health professional cannot unilaterally prescribe that a Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal be a specific accommodation while the student is receiving education services which may include accommodations at school.

When an adult student or parent seeks to have their child attend school or school related events with a Guide Dog / Service Dog, both the Guide Dog / Service Dog **and** the Student Handler must be certified as having been successfully trained by an accredited training facility.

Only in exceptional circumstances subject to the standards of undue hardship pursuant the *Human Rights Code*, will the School Board consider Service Animals, other than dogs, as an accommodation for a student and only if other reasonable methods of accommodation in the school setting have been unsuccessful in meeting the demonstrated disability-related learning needs of the student. In these circumstances, relevant regional bylaws will be taken into consideration.

Only in exceptional circumstances subject to the standards of undue hardship pursuant the *Human Rights Code*, will the School Board consider an application for a student who will not be acting as the primary trained Handler of the Guide Dog / Service Dog.

### **Dispute of Decision**

If the decision made by the principal is disputed by the parent and/or guardian, the principal will initiate a case conference or reconvene a case conference to review the service animal request in relationship to the student's meaningful access to education. The principal will inform the Family of Schools Superintendent and involve them.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

#### **The Board of Trustees is responsible for:**

- Reviewing and considering for approval all new and revised policies recommended for consideration by the Policy Committee including the Service Animals administrative procedure.
- Understanding and communicating with members of the community the content of this administrative procedure.

#### **The Director of Education is responsible for:**

- Implementing and operationalizing the Service Animals in Schools Administrative Procedure.
- Ensuring that senior administration and designated staff are responsible for the development of this administrative procedure.
- Designating resources for ensuring the implementation of and compliance with this Administrative Procedure.

**The Superintendent of Learning, Special Education is responsible for:**

- Developing the Service Animals in Schools Administrative Procedure in keeping with direction from the Council of Directors of Education.
- Supporting the process for service animal accommodation.

**Superintendents are responsible for:**

- Providing input to ensure this administrative procedure captures the specific and relevant concerns that may arise from their family of schools and their particular portfolios.
- Conferring with principals of their families of schools upon receipt of request for a service animal.

**Principals are responsible for:**

Leading their school communities in communicating and understanding this administrative procedure in consideration of the following:

- School principals are responsible for the management of the school premises, the staff providing educational programs and the safety of all students.
- A school principal has authority to exclude any animal, including Guide Dogs / Service Dogs and Service Animals, from entry onto school premises and school building(s), as an accommodation for a student, provided that the student is offered appropriate alternative accommodation to meet the student's demonstrated disability-related learning needs.
- School principals, before admitting a Guide Dog / Service Dog into the school or on school related activities with the student Handler, shall require a parent/adult student to submit a completed application, included in [Appendix A](#) of the Procedure.
- Before admitting a Service Animal, the school principal shall require the parent/adult student to submit a completed application, included in [Appendix B](#) of the Procedure.
- On receipt of an application for a Guide Dog / Service Dog or Service Animal, the school principal shall review the application for completeness and may request any additional information or clarification necessary to assess the request for accommodation. The principal will inform the Family of Schools Superintendent of this request. A case conference may be initiated.
- The school principal shall be responsible for communication with the parent/adult student with respect to the accommodation process, and where approved the implementation and management of the accommodation.
- Notwithstanding that schools are not public spaces, where a student supported by a Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal, whose parent is the Handler, seeks only to attend a school excursion with the Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal, which is at a location where the public is customarily admitted, efforts will be made to facilitate the student's participation with the Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal and parent as the Handler.

- Inquiries may need to be made regarding competing rights and transportation arrangements.

**Teachers and Staff are responsible for:**

- Being familiar with and adhering to this administrative procedure in keeping with all other accommodations to learning for all students of the board.

**Parents are responsible for:**

Parents or Adult Students are required to provide all necessary documentation and engage in the consultation process for the purpose of considering and implementing, if appropriate, the request that a Guide Dog / Service Dog accompany the student at school and/or on school-related activities. The parent or adult student shall be responsible for:

- submission of [Appendix A](#);
- all costs related to the dog, food, grooming, harness, crate and/or mat and veterinary care;
- obtaining training and maintaining the Guide Dog / Service Dog training to provide the accommodation in a safe manner that does not disrupt student learning;
- providing confirmation of municipal license for the dog (to be updated annually),
- providing confirmation of certificates of training not older than 6 months from an Accredited Training Organization attesting that the dog and student Handler have successfully completed training and may safely engage in a public setting without creating a risk of safety or a risk of disruption within a school setting;
- providing a diagnosis from a registered pediatrician, psychologist, psychiatrist (or other regulated health professional as determined by the School Board) with a recommendation for the use of a Guide Dog / Service Dog;
- providing a description of the services provided by the Guide Dog / Service Dog to the student, and how those services will accommodate the student's disability-related needs and assist the student in achieving their learning goals and/or goals of daily living while at school;
- providing a certificate not greater than three (3) months old from a veterinarian qualified to practice veterinary medicine in the Province of Ontario attesting that, the dog is an adult; identifying the age and breed; does not have a disease or illness that might pose a risk to humans; has received all required vaccinations; and is in good health to assist the student (to be updated annually);
- obtaining general liability insurance providing coverage in an amount specified by the Board [1] in the event of an injury or death as a result of the Guide Dog / Service Dog's attendance on school property or on a school-related activity (to be updated annually) [2].

[1] Note usually \$2 million in general liability insurance coverage is requested. This requirement might need to be waived on the basis of equity in the event that it causes financial hardship for a family. [2] Note insurance should not pose a barrier to the provision of accommodation as a result of socio-economic factors.

**Students are responsible for:**

Students who have a service animal will be expected to act as the Guide Dog / Service Dog's primary Handler. The student Handler must be able to perform the following:

- demonstrate the ability to control the Guide Dog / Service Dog in accordance with the training received;
- ensure that the Guide Dog / Service Dog is always wearing a vest and leash or harness when the dog is not in its crate.
- ensure the Guide Dog / Service Dog does not disrupt the learning of others with unnecessary movement, vocalization or other behaviour, including aggressive or threatening behaviour;
- ensure that the Guide Dog / Service Dog's biological needs are addressed;
- transition and maintain at all times the Guide Dog / Service Dog on a leash, harness, mat and/or crate;
- comply with an accommodation plan that addresses the competing rights of others.

**PROGRESS INDICATORS:**

- Collection of data in relation to the number of applications and approval of service dogs in schools of the Board.
- Meaningful access to education for students who have disability-related needs that impact their learning.

**DEFINITIONS:**

For the purpose of this Procedure the following definitions apply:

***Accredited training organization*** is a guide dog or service dog trainer that is accredited by:

International Guide Dog Federation ("IGDF"): which develops and ensures compliance with the standards by which Guide Dogs for the blind/low vision are trained by its member organizations; or

Assistance Dogs International ("ADI"): which develops and ensures compliance with the standards by which Guide, Hearing and Service Dogs are trained by its member organizations; or

A Guide Dog or Service Dog trainer that attests to compliance with the Meghan Search and Rescue Standard in Support of Accessibility: Persons with a Disability Teamed with Service Dogs standard for training (MSAR).

**Adult student** shall be defined to mean a student who is 18 years of age or older or 16 or 17 years of age and has removed him/her/themselves from the care and control of their custodial parent

**Disability** means,

- a. any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device,
- b. a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- c. a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language,
- d. a mental disorder, or
- e. an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the [Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997](#);

**Guide Dog** means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations pursuant to the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*;

**Handler** refers to the individual trained by an Accredited Training Organization who is managing the Guide Dog / Service Dog and in most cases will be the student for whom the Guide Dog / Service Dog is provided;

**Parent** shall be defined to mean a custodial parent of the student or a guardian pursuant to the *Education Act*;

**Service Dog** means a dog which has been certified after successfully completing a training program provided by an Accredited Training Organization.

**Service Animal** for the purpose of this Procedure includes a therapy dog, companion animal, comfort animal and emotional support animal and includes a dog or other domesticated animal that may legally reside in an urban, residential home, that is not highly trained to perform particular tasks to assist with a student's disability-related needs, but provides emotional support (and/or companionship, calming influence) for a student with a disability-related mental health and/or psychological need and/or comfort during a difficult period.

## REFERENCES:

[Human Rights Code, RSO 1990, c.H.19](#)

[Education Act, RSO 1990, c.E2, s. 170\(1\), s.265\(1\); O. Reg. 298, s.11](#)



[PPM 163 School Board Policies on Service Animals](#)

[J.F. v. Waterloo Catholic District School Board, 2017 HRTO 1121 \(CanLII\)](#)

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, SO 2005, c.11](#)

[Blind Persons' Rights Act, RSO 1990, c.B7,](#)

[Dog Owners' Liability Act, RSO 1990, c.D16](#)

[Health Protection and Promotion Act, RSO 1990, c.H7](#)

[Food Safety and Quality Act 2001, SO 2001, c.20](#)

[Laudato Si](#)

#### **RELATED FORMS AND LETTERS:**

[Appendix A Application Request for Guide Dog / Service Dog](#)

[Appendix B Application Request for Service Animal](#)

[Appendix C Checklist for principals](#)

[Appendix D \(Sample Letters\)](#)

- Sample Letter to Employees & School Permit Holders
- Sample Letter to the School Community
- Sample Letter to the Parents of Students on the School Bus
- Sample Letter to Parents of Students in the Class(es)
- Sample Letter Approving the Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal
- Sample Letter Denying the Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal