

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NO. 354

SERVICE DOG/THERAPY DOG

Definitions

Service Dog:

This animal is most commonly determined to be a dog trained as a guide for a disabled person and having the qualifications prescribed by a regulatory framework (Service Dogs Act of Alberta, 2009). Training standards require that the dog's equipment must make it clear that it is a working dog. A service dog is defined as a dog that meets the requirements of the Service Dogs Act, Alberta and Regulations, this framework recognizes dogs that have been trained by schools accredited by Assistance Dogs International, the International Guide Dog Federation and organizations approved by the Minister, seniors, community and social services. Service Dogs are deemed to be essential in assuring the rights of students with disabilities and human rights afforded to all students.

Therapy Dog:

Therapy Dogs provide educational supports for students by serving as a resource to support psychological or physiological needs. The Therapy Dog will have a distinctive harness, saddlebag, vest or bandana and will always be on a leash. These dogs have stable temperaments and friendly, easy-going personalities. Because Therapy Dogs are encouraged to interact with a variety of people while on duty, it makes them ideal for community settings; such as a school. The use of a Therapy Dog is a strategy that is recognized to help improve many psychological conditions such as anxiety and depression, increased social skills, decrease stress levels, improve mood, promote greater self-esteem and encourage positive interactions. Provisions that apply to protecting people with disabilities and their Service Dogs do not apply to Therapy Dogs and their handlers. Although Therapy Dogs are specially evaluated, trained, and registered for their volunteer work, they do not undergo the same extensive specialized and unique training required of Service Dogs.

Procedures

A. Service Dog

1. The parent must give notice to the school, in writing, that the student be supported by a Service Dog. APPENDIX A: NOTICE FOR A CERTIFIED SERVICE DOG must be completed and submitted to the school principal.
 - 1.1. The parent must submit a valid identification card issued by the Government of Alberta as proof of qualification.
 - 1.2. Annually, the school must be provided with proof of up to date vaccinations provided by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine confirming that the dog is in good health.

- 1.3. The parent must provide a plan to the school for the personal care and physical needs of the dog, including a daily bio-break procedure, disposal of waste and providing an appropriate kennel, food and water bowl.
- 1.4. The parent/guardian will work with the school administrator to schedule training for the student's school team and bus driver(s) by the Service Dog organization and to educate the student body in the school and those on the bus on the role of the Service Dog and on the rules of conduct concerning the animal. This process will be ongoing as staff changes, grade changes, and other circumstances warrant it.
- 1.5. School will provide signage at all entrances alerting visitors/emergency service providers that a Service Dog is on duty.
- 1.6. The parent/guardian will indicate who will accompany and handle the Service Dog both inside and outside the school and what arrangements have been made with regard to alternate handlers when necessary.
2. The principal shall ensure that the use of the Service Dog is consistent with the needs and recommendations of the student's education plan. (APPENDIX E: PRINCIPAL CHECKLIST)
3. The principal shall ensure that school staff, students, parents and appropriate people are informed about the arrival of the Service Dog to the school. (APPENDIX B: SAMPLE LETTER TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY - SERVICE DOG & APPENDIX D: SAMPLE LETTER TO THE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM - SERVICE DOG)
4. The principal shall arrange for a case conference to:
 - 4.1. Conference with parents/guardians regarding days/hours the dog may be expected in school;
 - 4.2. Set the personal and physical care of the dog:
 - 4.2.1. The safest and most environmentally sound location for the dog to take a bio-break,
 - 4.2.2. Handler requirements,
 - 4.2.3. Removal and disposal of the animal waste,
 - 4.2.4. Considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather;
 - 4.3. Arrange for classroom considerations (such as seating plans);
 - 4.4. Allow for a transition plan for the arrival of the dog to the school and classroom to be developed and put in place and,
 - 4.5. Set rules of conduct around the Service Dog for students, staff and the public.

5. The principal shall ensure that the school community and the students in the classroom will be informed about the arrival of the working Service Dog, its purpose, rules and regulations regarding the presence of the Service Dog at school.
6. A sign should be placed at the entrance of the school alerting visitors to the presence of a dog.
7. The Service Dog organization will be asked to provide in-service training to the student's school team.
8. An appropriate fire exit and lockdown plan must be put into place and the Fire and Police Departments notified as to the presence of the dog in the school.
9. The principal shall inform the Superintendent or designate -that a Service Dog will be present at the school.
10. The school may impose some restrictions on the Service Dog for safety reasons. The Service Dog may be excluded or have limited access to certain areas of the school facilities or certain programs for safety reasons. Areas or programs which may be considered off limits for Service Dogs include but are not limited to:
 - 10.1. Laboratories, mechanical closets, custodial closets, food preparation areas, areas where protective clothing is required, areas that have exposed sharp metal cuttings or other sharp objects, areas with high levels of dust and areas where there is moving machinery.
11. If needed, transportation must be arranged. (See APPENDIX G)
12. At the end of each year, the student's learning team will review the student's program needs related to the Service Dog to discuss the dog's contribution to the student's overall learning plan and share the schools perspective. *However, access is guaranteed by the Service Dog Act.*
13. On occasion, circumstances of possible conflicting rights may occur. Employees, students or parents/guardians of students with medical issues that are impacted by animals (such as respiratory diseases) should contact the school Principal if they have a concern about exposure to a Service Dog. That individual will be asked to provide medical documentation that identifies the disability and the need for an accommodation. The school Principal will facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the conflicting needs / accommodation of all persons involved.
14. A copy of all Service Dog request documentation will be placed in the digital Student Record of the student requiring the Service Dog.

B. Therapy Dog:

1. Anyone wishing to use a Therapy Dog to support programming goals in a school shall

provide a letter outlining the benefits of having the Therapy Dog work with the children, descriptions of the Therapy Dog's activities, and the duration of the support. These requests must go through the administration.

Additionally, those wishing to use a Therapy Dog to support children's programs shall:

- a. Provide documentation indicating who the handler is, certification of authenticity, and documentation that the Therapy Dog is in good health (retired certified Service Dogs may qualify as therapy animals). There are a number of different certifying agencies for this purpose including but not limited to St. John's Ambulance, Companion Paws and the Pet Therapy Society of Northern Alberta. All financial costs to obtain this certification are the sole responsibility of the trainer/handler;
 - b. Provide up-to-date proof of vaccinations, and ensure the Therapy Dog is in good health;
 - c. Provide for the responsibility of care of the Therapy Dog including the need for "biobreaks," disposal of waste and provision of food and water;
 - d. Provide the school with signage (generally provided by the Therapy Dog organization) alerting visitors / emergency service providers to the Therapy Dog's presence;
 - e. Indicate who will accompany and handle the therapy dog both inside and outside the school and what arrangements have been made with regard to alternate handlers when necessary;
 - f. Pay for any financial implications regarding the training use, and care of the Therapy Dog; and
 - g. Ensure the Therapy Dog has appropriate controls in place (leashed, caged, or harnessed) while on school property.
2. When an administrator receives a written request for permission to have a therapy dog brought to the school, the principal shall refer to (APPENDIX F: CHECKLIST FOR PRINICIPAL - THERAPY DOG).
- a. Arrange a meeting involving staff to discuss:
 - b. Notification and involvement of school staff;
 - c. The purpose and function of the Therapy Dog in relation to optimizing students' learning / and or safety for the students;
 - d. Other concerns including interference with delivery of an educational program, possible changes to in-class routines and procedures, increased demands on staff, other children and staff who are allergic to the therapy dog, recognition of children with fear of Therapy Dogs, and cultural sensitivities of those who will not share space with a specific animal;

- e. Inform school community of the potential arrival of a Therapy Dog to the school using the Sample Letter to the School Community re: Therapy Dog in School (APPENDIX C: SAMPLE LETTER TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY - THERAPY DOG ONLY);
 - f. Send a specific letter home to the parents of students who will be in any of the classes where the Therapy Dog will possibly be present in case of allergies, anxieties or other concerns. Should a conflict arise, priority will be given to the health and safety of the school community and the Therapy Dog will be excluded from that area, and
 - g. Work with appropriate personnel to revise emergency and safety procedures, as required, to include the therapy animal.
 - h. Whether or not to approve of the plan, and if approved, forward all relevant information to the Associate Superintendent - Inclusive Learning.
3. Trainer/handlers of any Service Dog or Therapy Dog are expected to carry a minimum of \$2,000,000 general liability insurance or proof of equivalent insurance through the organization the handler and Service Dog / therapy dog are representing.

Note: The following is a list of Appendices.

APPENDIX A: Notice for a Service Dog

APPENDIX B: Sample Letter to the School Community-Service Dog

APPENDIX C: Sample Letter to the School Community-Therapy Dog

APPENDIX D: Sample Letter to Families with Children in the Classroom-Service Dog

APPENDIX E: Principal Checklist-Service Dog

APPENDIX F: Principal Checklist-Therapy Dog

APPENDIX G: Transportation Protocol -Service Dog

Reference: Education Act
Human Rights Code
Blind Persons Act

May 2011, November 2019, Revised September 2023

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APPENDIX 'A'

NOTICE FOR A CERTIFIED SERVICE DOG

Name of Student: _____ D.O.B. _____

Address: _____

School: _____

Name(s) of Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____

Telephone Number: _____

a) Length of time the student and Certified Service Dog have worked together:

b) I/We understand that it is our responsibility to:

- Provide the principal with all required documentation, reports, and certificates in a timely manner;
- Participate in a school case conference to inform the principal of all relevant information that may affect our child, other students, staff, and/or visitors to the school;
- Assist the principal to communicate relevant information to the school community;
- Work cooperatively with the school staff to ensure the accommodation of the Service Dog is successful;
- Work with the Transportation department to ensure successful transportation of your child and the Service Dog to school every day;
- Provide the required equipment and dog care items;
- Provide food, water and bio-breaks to the Service Dog as required and,
- Remove and dispose of animal waste in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.

c) I/We understand that if the Certified Service Dog exhibits any unprovoked behaviours (i.e. growling, scratching, nipping, biting, etc.) at school it will be removed until the plan is re-evaluated to ensure the safety of staff, students, and visitors.

d) I/We give permission for this information to be shared with the school community and agree to the notification our students through letters (Appendices B &/or D).

e) I/We understand that the principal shall preserve the confidentiality of all information received and shall not disclose the information except as provided for in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Education Act or as otherwise required by law. The principal shall use and disclose information with Board personal as may be required for the performance of their duties.

f) I/We acknowledge having received and read Administrative Procedure NO. 354 Service Dogs/Therapy Dog.

Signature of Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____

Date: _____

For Office Use Only:

Request for Certified Service Dog: Approved: _____ Denied: _____

Signature of Principal: _____

Date: _____

Revised September 2023

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APPENDIX 'B'

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY - SERVICE DOG ONLY

Date

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Service Dog in our school assisting one of our students. This dog is a trained companion for the student and is able to assist him/her in many of the daily routines while learning at school.

This certified Service Dog is highly trained and recognized by an accredited Canadian training facility. The student's right to have a certified Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation and the Education Act and therefore can be with the handler in all aspects of his/her education.

All students will be informed as to proper procedures around the dog because the dog is not a pet but a certified working service animal while at school.

We anticipate the Service Dog to be a benefit to the student's learning and we look forward to this new addition to our school community.

Thank you for your understanding and support. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school office.

Sincerely,

Principal

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APPENDIX 'C'

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY - THERAPY DOG ONLY

Date

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Therapy Dog in our school providing students with social and emotional support. Therapy Dogs are trained and certified to work with groups of people in a community setting and will be in your child's school effective (date).

This Therapy Dog, _____, will have a distinctive harness, saddlebag, vest or bandana and will always be on a leash. These dogs have stable temperaments and friendly, easy-going personalities highly trained and recognized by an accredited Canadian training facility.

Because Therapy Dogs are encouraged to interact with a variety of people while on duty, it makes them ideal for school settings. The use of a Therapy Dog is a strategy that is recognized to help improve many psychological conditions such as anxiety and depression, increased social skills, develop self-regulation skills, decrease stress levels, improve mood, promote greater self-esteem and encourage positive interactions.

We anticipate the Therapy Dog _____, to be a benefit to the student's learning and their social and emotional development and we look forward to this new addition to our school community.

Thank you for your understanding and support. Please inform us if your child has any allergies or aversions to dogs. Should you have any other questions or concerns, please contact the school office.

Sincerely,

Principal

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APPENDIX 'D'

**SAMPLE LETTER TO FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM - SERVICE
DOG ONLY**

Date

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Service Dog in our school assisting one of our students. This dog is a trained companion for a student and will be in your child's classroom effective (date).

This certified Service Dog is highly trained and recognized by an accredited Canadian training facility. The student's right to have a certified Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation and the Education Act and therefore can be with the handler in all aspects of his/her education. An upcoming information session for parents will offer more information on how the dog will be integrated into the school setting.

Students will be informed as to proper procedures around the dog because the dog is not a pet but a certified working service animal while at school.

We anticipate the Service Dog to be a benefit to the student's learning and we look forward to this new addition to our school community.

Thank you for your understanding and support. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school office.

Sincerely,

Principal

Revised May 2023

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APPENDIX 'E'

PRINCIPAL CHECKLIST-SERVICE DOG

This guideline is to assist school administration in preparing for a Service Dog to accompany a student at school.

- ___ Parents have given notice in writing using **Appendix 'A'** .
- ___ The parents have provided a valid guide dog identification card and up-to-date proof of vaccination.
- ___ The parent has been informed that the maintenance of the Service Dog, including bio-breaks, clean-up and other care is the responsibility of the parent/handler.
- ___ The parent has met with the principal to discuss the potential impact of the Service Dog on the school community.
- ___ The principal has consulted with the Superintendent or their designate to inform them of the Service Dog.
- ___ The principal has communicated with the school community to ensure that parents know a Service Dog will be present in the school.

Revised September 2023

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APPENDIX 'F'

PRINCIPAL CHECKLIST-THERAPY DOG

This guideline is to assist school administration in preparing for a Therapy Dog to support students on specific days.

- ___ Staff member has requested permission in writing.
- ___ The Therapy Dog handler has received orientation to the school, exits, and safety protocols
- ___ The Therapy Dog handler has provided:
 - certificate of accreditation with an approved organization and,
 - the dog's current vaccines.
- ___ The Therapy Dog handler has been informed that the maintenance of the Therapy dog, including bio-breaks, clean-up and other care is the responsibility of the handler and the appropriate location has been identified.
- ___ The staff member has met with the principal to discuss the potential impact of the Therapy Dog on the school community and has a well developed plan.
- ___ The principal has consulted with the Superintendent or their designate prior to granting permission.
- ___ The principal has communicated with the school community to ensure that parents know a Therapy Dog will be present in the school.

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APPENDIX 'G'

TRANSPORTATION PROTOCOL

The following protocol is suggested for a safe ride with the Service Dog.

1. A student that is eligible to bring a dog to school is allowed by law to have the Service Dog transported on the school bus.
2. Signage will be posted on the bus to identify that there is a Service Dog on board.
3. Any Transportation Department (RDCRS, CESD, Wildrose, City Transit, etc...) should be provided with proof that the Service Dog is a licensed, trained dog.
4. Ensure there is documentation about the Service Dog with the route information to ensure all drivers and spare drivers are informed.
5. The Service Dog should not sit in the aisle of the bus. Whenever possible, they should be in the seat compartment and/or on the floor away from the aisle to prevent it from becoming a projectile or a tripping hazard.
6. The handler or school must provide basic training for the driver and other students on the bus to ensure all parties have an understanding of what is allowed and what is not allowed.
7. The Service Dog is a highly trained animal and should not be touched or fed by anyone but the handler. The dog is working while on the bus and therefore should be quiet, still, and attentive to the handler.