

AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

NO. 148

SUBJECT: USE OF GUIDE DOGS/SERVICE DOGS

Legal References: *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; Ontario Human Rights Code; Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA); O. Reg. 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer Service; Blind Persons' Rights Act; R.R.O. Reg.58 Guide Dogs; Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum 161 Supporting Children and Students with Prevalent Medical Conditions*

Related References: *Ministry of Education: The Individual Education Plan (IEP) – A Resource Guide, ; Avon Maitland District School Board Annual Accessibility Plan; Ministry of Education: Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools; Administrative Procedure (AP) 141 Equity and Inclusive Education; AP145 Use of Support Person by the General Public, AP146 Use of Service Animals by the General Public; AP314 Supporting Students with Prevalent Medical Conditions in Schools*

1.0 Purpose

The use of specially trained guide dogs or service dogs is one strategy used to accommodate the special needs of some students. This guideline provides direction to school administrators regarding the admittance and implementation of guide dogs or service dogs into the school environment.

The school board recognizes that the needs of students receiving special education services are highly variable. Many students have mild or moderate needs that require some extra supports, while others may have very high needs requiring intensive supports in the classroom every day. As a result, under the *Education Act*, school boards have been given the responsibility and flexibility to design individual programs for each student with special education needs.

Provincial accessibility legislation and the *Human Rights Code* provide authority for service animals to accompany their handlers in all public places including schools.

As needs of students are different, school boards identify an individual student's needs through an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and identify the special education program and services that will be provided to the student. Support of service dogs is one strategy boards may use to accommodate students so that they are able to attend school and access the Provincial Curriculum and/or alternative programs.

2.0 Background

2.1 This Administrative Procedure outlines the procedures for "service dogs" (including hearing ear dogs, assistance dogs, and skill dogs) and "guide dogs". See Appendix A: Background Information for additional information.

2.2 A "service dog" is defined as a dog for a person with a disability, if:
a) it is readily apparent that the dog is a service animal for a person with a disability;
or

- b) the person provides a letter from a qualified medical professional confirming that the person requires the dog for reasons relating to the disability.
- 2.3 A “guide dog” is defined as a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the *Blind Persons’ Rights Act*.
- 2.4 For the purpose of this Administrative Procedure, a “guide dog” or “service dog” is considered to be an accommodation that is required to allow a student to attend and/or access the Ontario Curriculum. Accommodations refer to specialized supports that enable a student to learn and to demonstrate learning. These supports are defined as “special teaching and assessment strategies including human supports, and/or individualized equipment required” (*The Individual Education Plan (IEP) A Resource Guide, 2004, p. 25*). (See Appendix A: Background Information)
- 2.5 *The Blind Persons’ Rights Act, Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code* provide authority for guide dogs to accompany their handlers in all public places (except where excluded by law), including schools and buses. Guide dogs and service dogs and their handlers receive specialized training to work together, and consequently the dogs should present minimal risk to or impact on other people.
- 2.6 Where there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of a guide dog/service dog, consideration must be given to options available to minimize or eliminate the risk. For example, where an individual has a severe allergy (e.g., prevalent medical condition) to the animal, all measures will be considered to minimize or eliminate the risk (e.g., by creating distance between the individuals concerned and/or making reasonable alterations to schedules).
- 2.7 A service dog will be excluded if it is a breed of animal prohibited by law.
- 2.8 When parents approach the school principal requesting the use of a guide dog or service dog, the parents must provide documentation indicating if the request is for a guide dog or service dog.

3.0 Individual Consideration for Approval

Decisions regarding the implementation of the use of a guide dog or service dog into the school environment are made by a school principal on a case-by-case basis. All circumstances of a particular case, including the individual needs of the student being assisted by the dog, and the needs of other students and staff will be considered. Where necessary in the decision making process, the rights and needs of one person may have to be balanced against the rights and needs of another. Consultation with all stakeholders will be carried out to ensure that these rights and needs are met. The principal also reviews the request with the superintendent of Learning Services and the principal or vice-principal of Learning Services.

4.0 Procedures

- 4.1. Procedures for the Implementation of the Use of Service Dogs or Guide Dogs in School Environment
 - a) To initiate the process of having the dog assist the student in school, the parents/guardians must make the request in writing using the following forms:
 - i) Appendix B: Information for Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Requesting a Guide Dogs/Service Dog in the School;

- ii) Appendix B-Part 2: Request for Guide Dog/Service Dog Involvement with a Student; and
 - iii) Appendix C: Management Plan for the Care of the Guide Dog/Service Dog.
- The preceding forms set out the responsibilities (financial and otherwise) of the parent(s)/guardian(s) relating to the animal with respect to its care, transportation and use by the student while at school.

- b) The parent(s)/guardian(s) shall provide the principal with the following documentation:
 - i) letter from a qualified professional confirming that the person requires the guide dog/service dog for reasons relating to the disability unless the parent(s)/guardian(s) or the person who has reached the age 18 years provides the principal with the identification referred to in Section 4 of the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*;
 - ii) copy of the dog's registration and training certification with a recognized training centre (in the case of a guide dog from a centre described in R.R.O. Reg. 58 Guide Dogs unless the parent(s)/guardian(s) or the person who has reached the age 18 years, provides the principal with the identification referred to in Section 4 of the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, and in the case of a service dog from the National Service Dog Training Centre or equivalent registered organization, stating that a certified service dog has been placed with the child and the date of formal certified service dog team recognition;
 - iii) copy of current official vaccination certificate;
 - iv) proof of municipal dog license, if applicable; and
 - v) copy of training certification of individual responsible for the dog, unless the parent(s)/guardian(s) or the person who has reached the age 18 years provides the principal with the identification referred to in Section 4 of the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*.
- c) The principal will submit all documentation and input and consult with the superintendent of Learning Services and the principal or vice-principal of Learning Services prior to planning the implementation process.
- d) The principal will schedule a case conference with the parent(s)/guardian(s), the classroom teacher(s), the special education resource teacher (SERT), Learning Services consultant, and if assigned, an educational assistant(s) who works with the student. The purpose of the case conference is to review the IEP description of the student's needs and the required accommodations including the type of service the dog will provide.
- e) All school staff members, teaching and non-teaching, must be informed early in the process that the guide dog/service dog will be located in the school. Their input and information will assist the principal in the implementation process. Every attempt should be made to inform all stakeholders: school staff, teaching assistants, custodial staff, Huron Perth Student Transportation Services, and school council that a guide dog/service dog will be in the school.
- f) Discussions will also include other relevant information such as safety considerations (e.g., severe allergies, a prevalent medical condition such as asthma, other allergies, fear of dogs, etc.), the potential impact of the involvement of the dog on the school community, dog care requirements, handling routines and responsibilities, guidelines for staff and students, other student issues, transportation to school, the role of and communication with the

parent(s)/guardian(s), and the resources available to the school. Cultural sensitivities to dogs may also need to be considered.

- g) The principal shall include the School Council on matters pertaining to the school community. An information session for parents and other interested community members will be held to inform them, and to receive relevant information. The principal shall invite the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student needing the guide dog/service dog to participate in the information session.
- h) As part of the implementation process when the request is made, careful consideration of all the factors will facilitate the transition of the dog into the school environment. Attention to consistency, routines, communication, staff in-service, school assemblies, and community notification are required (See Appendix D: Sample Letter to the School Community).
- i) Signs must be placed on the entrance doors of the school, and the bus window if transportation is required, to inform visitors of the presence of the service dog/guide dog.
- j) An appropriate fire and emergency exit plan must be developed. Personnel from the local fire/police departments may be available to assist with the plan.
- k) The principal shall meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and student (if appropriate) to review the implementation plan, emergency exit plan, Management Plan for the Care of the Guide Dog/Service Dog and to review the IEP in relation to the guide dog/service dog.
- l) The principal will develop a communication strategy to inform stakeholders who will come into contact with the guide dog/service dog of the following:
 - i) guidelines for staff and students as to the potential impact of the dog in the school;
 - ii) appropriate interactions with the dog; and
 - iii) safety and health concerns.
- m) The principal shall monitor and review the documentation on an annual basis to ensure that all registrations, vaccinations, licenses, certificates as well as the Management Plan for the Care of the Guide Dog/Service Dog are current.
- n) A copy of the parent/guardian request (including all required supporting documentation) will be retained in the documentation file of the Ontario Student Record (OSR).
- o) Checklist (See Appendix E: Administrative Checklist for Implementation of Guide Dog/Service Dog into a School Environment).

Background Information

A trained service dog performs specific tasks related to the specific disability of the student who may require its assistance in order to access the Ontario Curriculum. Examples include guide dogs for blind students and hearing dogs for deaf students. There are also dogs trained to assist students with autism and medical conditions such as epilepsy. A request for a service dog may not be refused.

Dogs used by students in schools must be registered in Canada and be trained by a recognized dog training centre. In the case of a guide dog, the training must comply with R.R.O Reg. 58, Guide Dogs.

National Service Dogs (a member of Assistance Dogs International – ADI)

Since 1996, National Service Dogs Training Centre Inc. (NSD) has been training and placing certified service dogs with children in North America who have disabilities. Under the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*, the *Public Access Law*, and the *Human Rights Code* individuals accompanied by a certified service dog cannot be denied service or access to public places.

A service dog, when well-trained and supported, not only demonstrates its trained tasks but can also support increased safety, support increased social bonding, and support self-control for individuals with a disability such as autism.

A certified service dog (certified by NSD, Canada's only recognized training centre for the certification of trained service dogs working with children who have autism) is not the same as a companion dog or therapy dog. A certified service dog is a recognized working dog and strict guidelines apply for the access, handling, and interaction with these dogs.

When parents approach the principal requesting the use of a service dog, please check to see whether it is a certified service dog or a companion dog that they are requesting. The difference is delineated above; a companion dog can be refused, and a service dog cannot.

Hearing Ear Dogs of Canada

On May 30, 1988, Hearing Ear Dogs of Canada became the next project of the Lions Foundation of Canada. These dogs are trained to alert deaf and hearing-impaired people to every day sounds, and bring independence and new confidence to their silent lives.

This program usually trains small to medium sized dogs about a year old who display that they are friendly and willing to work. The dogs are medically checked and then begin a six month training program in a simulated home environment at the training centre. They are taught to distinguish sounds, make physical contact with the handler and lead the person to the sound.

Applicants must be a least 17 years of age, living independently and be able to care for a dog. Successful applicants then begin a two week program to learn how to work and bond with their dog guide. The dog is custom trained to respond to the sounds particular to the client's home – a baby crying, kettle boiling, phone ringing, etc. The dog can also be trained to respond to hand signals if the new owner cannot speak clearly to give verbal commands. Certified hearing ear dogs are distinguished by the internationally recognized bright orange collar and leash that is stenciled with "HEARING EAR DOGS OF CANADA".

Lions Foundation of Canada

In addition to training dog guides for people who are blind or visually impaired, the Foundation also trains dog guides to meet the needs of Canadians with hearing and other medically and physically limiting disabilities. The Dog Guide Program includes:

- Canine Vision Canada Dog
- Special Skills Dogs of Canada
- Hearing Ear Dogs of Canada
- Seizure Response
- Autism Assistance

Acknowledgement is given to Danielle Forbes, Executive Director, National Service Dogs, Inc., Waterloo Region District School Board, and Near North District School Board for their assistance.

Information for Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Requesting a Guide Dog/Service Dog in the School

1. The success of the implementation of a guide dog/service dog into a school setting depends on clear communication, a well-informed school community and careful planning. The information you provide will assist the principal to make the best possible decisions for your child and other students as well as for the staff, volunteers and visitors in the school. The information will be filed in your child's Ontario Student Record (OSR).
2. The use of a guide dog/service dog is considered to be an accommodation to help your child learn and to develop the necessary skills to achieve success at school. If your child already has an Individual Education Plan, it will be reviewed at a case conference, or one will be developed in consultation with you. The principal will invite you, your child's teacher, a representative from the training centre, the SERT in the school, and the Learning Services Consultant to the case conference to discuss your child's needs, the accommodations that are already in place for your child, as well as the additional assistance provided by a guide dog/service dog.
3. The information you provide will help the principal to approve and/or implement your request. It is important that you provide the information that addresses the safety of the students and staff. For example, the principal needs to determine that the dog has no history of nipping, biting or growling at children or adults, nor exhibits aggressive protective behaviours. The principal also needs to know if any student or member of staff has severe medical or psychological reactions to dogs that may require accommodations to be employed via the case of guide dogs/service dogs.
4. The well-being of the dog is also very important. Its care, handling and training needs will be addressed by the trained handler or designate. The principal also needs to know what other resources are available to facilitate the implementation of the plan. Strategies for becoming familiar with the building and school grounds, introduction to assemblies/concerts, recess, and informing the staff about interacting with the dog will need to be included in the planning to be as consistent and fair to the dog as possible.
5. The principal includes the School Council on matters pertaining to the school community. It is customary to provide an information session for the council and other interested parents. Important information shared in this way facilitates understanding and acceptance of new practices at the school. You will be asked to participate in the information session.
6. Once the necessary information has been discussed, the principal will consult with the Superintendent of Learning Services and the Principal of Learning Services prior to the implementation of the guide dog/service dog into the school.
7. After all information gathering and sharing has occurred, all necessary approvals have been given, and planning is in place, the goal will be to implement the plan as soon as possible.
8. To facilitate the implementation of the dog into the school, a series of planning steps must take place to ensure a smooth transition for the entry of the dog.
9. Your responsibilities include:
 - Transporting or walking the dog to and from school or contacting the transportation consortium to arrange transportation with the student.
 - Providing the required equipment and dog care items and daily care at school.

- Assuming financial responsibility for the training of the dog, veterinary care and all other related costs.
- Working cooperatively with the school staff to make this accommodation a success.
- Assisting the principal to communicate relevant information to the school community.
- Providing the principal with required documentation in a timely fashion.
- Informing the principal of all relevant information that may affect the students and staff.

Request for Guide Dog/Service Dog Involvement With A Student

Name of Student: _____ DOB: _____

Address: _____

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

Telephone Numbers: _____

1. I/We request that _____ be allowed to use a guide dog/service dog (circle one) at school and at school-related activities.

2. The service dog will provide the student with: (please list)

3. Length of time the student and dog have worked together: _____

4. Duration of this requested intervention: _____

5. Additional information that will assist the principal (e.g., safety, behaviour, or temperament of the dog issues): (please list)

- 6. I/We understand that it is our responsibility to:
• Walk the dog to and from school or in the case of a student who is bussed, contact the general manager of the Huron Perth Student Transportation Services.
• Provide the required equipment and dog care items and daily care at school.
• Provide an adult from the family or designate to be available on a consistent basis to take the service dog for a "bio-break" at least one time per day preferably mid-day.
• Assume financial responsibility for the training of the dog, veterinary care, and all other related costs.
• Work cooperatively with the school staff to make this accommodation a success.
• Assist the principal to communicate relevant information to the school community.
• Provide the principal with required documentation in a timely fashion.

- i. Copy of Recommendation for Guide Dog/Service Dog or Companion Dog, or identification card for guide dog;
 - ii. Copy of registration with a recognized training centre for dog or identification card for guide dog;
 - iii. Copy of current, official Vaccination Certificate for the dog;
 - iv. Proof of municipal dog license, if applicable;
 - v. Documentation from qualified professional; and
 - vi. Copy of training certification of parent(s)/guardian(s) (except for Guide Dog).
- Inform the principal of all relevant information that may affect your child, the other students, and/or staff.

7. I/We give permission for this information to be shared with the school community.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

For Office Use Only

Request Approved: _____

Signature of Principal: _____ Date: _____

Management Plan for the Care of the Guide Dog/Service Dog

Name of Student: _____ DOB: _____

O.E.N: _____ School: _____

School Year: _____

Name of Dog: _____

Trained Handler or Designate (not school staff): _____

Note: These responsibilities should be handled by the student, trained handler or designate (not school staff) in the same manner as at home.

Water Needs: (e.g., provision of water bowl, procedures for use, cleaning, etc.)

Bladder/Bowel Needs of Dog: (e.g., frequency, location, disposal, etc.)

Other Considerations:

1. Rest Periods away from Work:

2. Hot Weather:

3. Winter Weather:

4. Other:

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Principal: _____

Date: _____

Protocol for Guide Dog/Service Dog in Schools

**SAMPLE LETTER to the SCHOOL COMMUNITY
(on SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)**

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Guide Dog/Service Dog in our school assisting one of our students.

This Guide Dog/Service Dog is a highly trained companion for our student and is able to assist in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for this student. The child's right to have a Guide Dog/Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

An information session for parents will be held on _____ at the school regarding the Guide Dog/Service Dog. An assembly will be held for all students to communicate the proper procedure regarding the Guide Dog/Service Dog. Please feel free to attend the assembly. They will be informed that the Guide Dog/Service Dog is a working dog and not a pet while at school.

Already the Guide Dog/Service Dog has been a benefit to the student and we look forward to continued growth and learning together.

Thank you for your understanding, support and interest.

Sincerely,

Principal

c.c. Superintendent of Learning Services, Principal of Learning Services, Classroom Teacher, OSR

Administrative Checklist for Implementation Of Guide Dog/Service Dog in a School Environment

TASK	DATE COMPLETED
Advise parent(s)/guardian(s) and student 18 years and older who is making the request that the Avon Maitland District School Board has a procedure to follow before a decision is made.	
Provide parent(s)/guardian(s) with Information for Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Requesting a Guide Dog/Service Dog in the School (Appendix B-Part 1) and the form Request for a Guide Dog/Service Dog Involvement with a Student (Appendix B-Part 2) .	
Inform Superintendent of Learning Services and Principal of Learning Services of the request.	
If the request includes the school bus, inform the General Manager of Huron Perth Student Transportation Services who will work with the school principal and the bus company to develop a transportation plan.	
Convene a case conference with the following in attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or student over the age of 18 • Student of any age when appropriate • Classroom teachers and Special Education Resource Teacher • Learning Services Consultant • Representative from the Dog Training Centre (if necessary) • If assigned, an Educational Assistant(s) who works with the student 	
Receive and review copies of the required documentation: (parents provide on or before meeting) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of recommendation for guide dog/service dog, or identification card for guide dog • Copy of registration with a recognized training centre for dog or identification card for guide dog • Copy of current, official vaccination certificate for the dog • Proof of municipal dog license, if applicable • Documentation from qualified medical practitioner • Copy of training certification of parent(s)/guardian(s) (except for guide dog) 	
Inform school staff that a request has been made and receive their input. Consider prevalent medical conditions of your students and staff.	
Inform School Council and community at a School Council Meeting and receive their input.	
Consult with the Superintendent of Learning Services and Principal of Learning Services to determine if request is approved.	
Meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or student 18 years or older to complete Management Plan for the Care of the Guide Dog/Service Dog (Appendix C) once the application is approved.	
Provide the Superintendent of Learning Services and the Principal of Learning Services with a copy of Management Plan for the Care of the Guide Dog/Service Dog (Appendix C) .	
Complete letter Information Regarding Training of Guide Dog/Service Dog in Schools (Appendix D) to inform students, staff, community and relevant employee representatives.	

Post signs on the entrance doors and at any other appropriate places to advise visitors of the presence of the dog.	
Develop communications strategy.	
Develop fire and emergency exit plan.	
Monitor and review the implementation on a regular basis.	
Review the implementation with your Learning Services Consultant and/or Principal of Learning Services, and/or Superintendent of Learning Services, and/or General Manager of Huron Perth Student Transportation Services as needed.	
File relevant documentation and correspondence in the documentation file of the student's OSR.	