



# ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

### FACILITATING THE USE OF SERVICE/GUIDE DOGS BY STUDENTS OR STAFF

#### Purpose

The purpose of this Administrative Procedure is to outline the parameters and process regarding the use of service/guide dogs by students or staff in schools in the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board. When a staff member requires a service dog or when a parent/guardian requests that a service /guide dog accompany a student to support his or her educational environment, due consideration and diligence must be given to all factors impacting students and staff in a school, specifically those related to life-threatening allergies and disability. Similarly, staff members may need a service/guide dog. The health and safety of all persons in the school is important and, therefore, any accommodation needs must be individually assessed and addressed.

#### References

*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom*  
*Ontario Human Rights Code*  
*Ontarians with Disabilities Act*  
*Blind Persons' Rights Act*

#### Procedures

##### 1. **Background:**

The use of a service/guide dog is a strategy employed by some individuals with disabilities to assist in managing their environment. The use of a service/guide dog is implemented in the school with extensive consultation and clearly outlined responsibilities for all parties with respect to the dog's handling and communication of the dog's presence to the school community. The National Service Dogs trainer will support the school with training and communication.

The term "handler" refers to the person for whom the dog is provided (the student) or if the student is too young to be the handler, the Educational Assistant working with the student will be the "handler".

The Ontarians with Disabilities Act and Human Rights Code provide authority for service/guide dogs to accompany their handlers in all public places including schools and buses. The Human Rights Code and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act describe disability to mean:

- 1.1 any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defects 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,

- 1.2 a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability,
- 1.3 a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding using symbols or spoken language,
- 1.4 a mental disorder, or
- 1.5 an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 (handicap)

Service Animals: Service animals must be registered in Canada. They are given to individuals with the following disabilities: Physical, Blind or Low Vision, Deaf/Hearing Impaired, Autism Spectrum Disorder or seizure disorder.

## **2. Principal's Responsibility**

This administrative procedure is written to facilitate the use of a service /guide dog for a student whose parents/guardians are requesting to use a dog at school. Similar procedure should be followed when the student changes schools. The Principal shall inform the Superintendent of School Effectiveness responsible for Special Education regarding the request.

### **2.1 Collection of Information:**

Once parents/guardians have informed the school of the possibility of a service/guide dog support for their child the Principal shall collect from the parent/guardian the following information to be kept in the OSR:

- 2.1.1 A professional diagnosis of a disability which can be ameliorated through the use of service/guide dog.
- 2.1.2 A current letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the College of Psychologists confirming the diagnosis and recommendation for service/guide dog support.
- 2.1.3 A written request from the parent/guardian outlining the benefits and consideration of service/guide dog support for their child at school. See Appendix 1 for "Request for Service/Guide Dog Involvement".
- 2.1.4 The dog's certificate of training from the National Service Dogs Training Centre, Guide Dogs of Canada Training Centre or equivalent registered organization (as determined by the Board).
- 2.1.5 Proof that the dog has had its yearly vaccines, city license and is in good health to be with the student at school.
- 2.1.6 Information regarding the service/ guide dog , as well as the medical diagnosis will be retained in the OSR of the student.

### 3.1 Team Meeting

The school principal will schedule a Team Meeting with parent/guardian, the “handler” (Educational Assistant/student as defined by “handler”), representative from the service/guide dog organization, Classroom Teacher, Educational Assistant(s), Special Education Resource Teacher, Coordinator of Student Services and Superintendent of School Effectiveness responsible for Special Education and other support staff as deemed appropriate by the Principal to discuss:

- 3.1.1 The type of support that the dog will provide (purpose and function);
- 3.1.2 Consistency of the use of service/guide dog with the needs statements outlined in the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP);
- 3.1.3 Discuss the impact of the involvement of the service/guide dog on the classroom and school community; including reaction of peers, interference with the delivery of academic programs, possible changes to in-class routines and procedures, increased demands on resource staff and teachers, other children who may be allergic to dogs, recognition of children with fear of dogs, and cultural sensitivity to groups that will not share living space with an animal;
- 3.1.4 Protocol for others in the classroom/school to observe with the working dog;
- 3.1.5 Who will be responsible for the care and handling routines of the service dog. This rests totally with the handler/family. See Appendix 3;
- 3.1.6 Concerns that must be addressed and procedures that must be followed before the dog can begin attending with the student;
- 3.1.7 Transportation of the service/guide dog to and from the school and on school related trips; the Human Rights Code and the Blind Persons’ Rights Act allow the service/guide dog to accompany the student/ handler on the bus;
- 3.1.8 If the bus carrier transports students from other Boards, on the same bus while the dog is present, then the other Board must be notified so that the parents/guardians of the other students may be notified;
- 3.1.9 Arrange for an observation of the handler/dog working as a team in the home/community prior to implementation of this plan at school
- 3.1.10 Develop an appropriate transition/entry plan;
- 3.1.11 Review classroom seating arrangement;
- 3.1.12 The understanding with parents/guardians/school staff that should difficulties with the dog arise the Principal will contact the National Services Dogs Training Centre for support.

**Sample Guiding Questions for the Case Conference may include:**

- Who will accompany the handler/ student and dog outside?
- Where is the safest/ most environmentally sound place for the dog to relieve itself?

- Is there a suitable disposal container that the handler can reach?
  - How will the handler “clean up” after the animal?
  - What considerations have been made for winter conditions?
  - Where is the dog’s water bowl kept?
  - Who will fill the water bowl?
  - Who is responsible for the food and medical health care of the dog?
  - Where / how will the dog be accessed by the handler / student in the classroom?
  - What is the protocol in the event the handler is absent?
- (Site specific questions may be added during the case conference to ensure the development of an effective implementation plan.)

### **3. Development of the Plan**

Based on the discussions of the Team Meeting, the Principal shall develop a written understanding and management plan, see Appendices 2 and 3, with the parent/guardian that includes:

- 3.1 The dog’s care and training is the financial responsibility of the parent/guardian;
- 3.2 Liability associated with the dog’s behaviour is assumed by the parent/guardian;
- 3.3 The fully trained handler will provide for the personal care for the dog including:
  - 3.3.1 Walking the dog;
  - 3.3.2 Providing and handling water and cleaning up the drinking area as needed;
  - 3.3.3 Allowing the dog to relieve itself in a designated area, cleaning up feces and disposing in appropriate containers (feces/urine should not be deposited in any potential play area of the schoolyard. A designated location in a non-play area should be identified);
- 3.4 Agreements have been included as Appendix 2, “Acceptance of Responsibility for Service/Guide Dog” and Appendix 3, “Management for Daily Care Plan for Service/Guide Dogs”;
- 3.5 Emergency procedures should a situation arise. The information should include contact numbers where parents/guardians can be reached immediately;
- 3.6 An appropriate fire exit plan and Code Red procedures;
- 3.7 Establish a conflict resolution process;
- 3.8 Consideration of seasonal changes that may affect the dog;
- 3.9 Request from the service/guide dog organization training for the school team that includes Principal, Classroom Teacher, Special Education Resource Teacher and Educational Assistant(s).

#### **4. Transportation**

The following protocol is suggested for a safe ride with the service/guide dog:

- 4.1 Provide information to, and with the transportation consortium;
- 4.2 Determine location of the service/guide dog on the bus e.g. on the floor away from the aisle;
- 4.3 Request from the parent/guardian or service guide dog organization training for driver and other students on the bus e.g. No petting by anyone other than the handler;
- 4.4 Communicate to students who ride the bus and their parents, as in Appendix 4.

#### **5. Alert the School Community**

The Principal shall alert the school community as follows once the involvement is confirmed:

- 5.1 The Superintendent of School Effectiveness by forwarding a copy of Appendix 1 "Request for Service/Guide Dog Involvement with a Student";
- 5.2 The staff, by providing general information, at a general staff meeting. This meeting should include all support staff that may not ordinarily be included in "teachers" staff meetings. Note particularly that the union representatives/branch presidents are aware of the information;
- 5.3 The students and their parents/guardians in the school community via school newsletter or website article, or a letter such as Appendix 4. School culture, size and age of student will determine the most appropriate format;
- 5.4 The students (and their parents/guardians) in the classes in which the dog will be working in case of allergies or phobias;
- 5.5 Catholic School Community Council by providing general information at a council meeting;
- 5.6 The Fire Department as to the presence of the service/guide dog in the school;
- 5.7 The school community by posting a "Service/Guide Dog on Duty" information poster on the main doors of the school and the specific classroom where the dog will be working. (This should be done the first day the dog arrives);
- 5.8 The student body through a student assembly with a presentation by the service/guide dog organization and possibly the handler, if appropriate, or other information session which will enable teaching of appropriate interactions with service/guide dogs.

#### **6. Implementation**

The Principal shall meet with the parent/guardian to complete Appendix 4 and meet with the appropriate school staff to determine effective implementation.

- 6.1 Communicate information pertaining to the dog's care to appropriate staff:

water bowl  
bladder and bowel relief needs  
disposal of feces  
when and where the dog will be walked by whom

- 6.2 Board support staff involved with the student may be able to assist with the transition and entry process.
- 6.3 Review the student's IEP with the school team to incorporate the service/guide dog as an accommodation strategy.

## **7. Monitor and Adjust as Necessary**

In preparation for a new school year or a change in schools, the Principal shall:

- 7.1 Meet with the IEP development team to determine ongoing effectiveness of the service/guide dog support.
- 7.2 Meet with parents to review responsibilities and make adjustments to the Understanding and Management plan as needed.
- 7.3 Review protocol with students in the classroom, the school and the transportation staff.
- 7.4 Share information with Catholic School Council and parents of students in the same classroom as the working dog.
- 7.5 The use of the service/guide dog will be reviewed annually (within the first thirty school days of each school year) or as deemed necessary by school administration upon the request of the parent/guardian of the student or another student requiring accommodation, or of a staff member.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1: Letter to School Community
- Appendix 2: Sample Letter to the Families of Children in the Class(es)
- Appendix 3: Sample Letter to Those Sharing Transportation
- Appendix 4: Protocol for Facilitation of Service/ Guide Dogs in School - Principal's Checklist

### **Forms**

- Form A: Request for Service/Guide Dog Involvement with a Student
- Form B: Acceptance of Responsibility for Service/Guide Dog
- Form C: Management Plan for Care of Service/Guide Dog

Approved: October 27, 2009  
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