

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 192	
SECTION:	
Adopted/Original Date of Issue	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Last Reviewed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revised	February 2022
Next Review Date	February 2027
Contact	Superintendent - Program Services

## Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals by Students

### BACKGROUND

The Renfrew County District School Board is committed to the learning of all students and provides a range of placements, programs, and interventions to support student success. It is the policy of the RCDSB, 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.

The purpose of this Administrative Procedure is to outline the parameters and process regarding the use of Guide Dogs/Service Dogs and Service Animals by students in schools in the Renfrew County District School Board. When a parent/guardian requests that a Guide Dog/Service Dog and Service Animal accompany a student to support their 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. The health and safety of all persons in the school is important and, therefore, any accommodation request must be individually assessed.

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.

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.

For animals other than dogs, the District will decide whether the animal is an appropriate accommodation in the school setting to accommodate a demonstrated disability-related learning need. Such a decision will consider that 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, disruption, and distraction in the learning environment, the District does not permit the training of potential guide dogs and service dogs in the school setting or during school activities.

## 1. DEFINITIONS

1.1 For the purpose of this Procedure the following definitions apply:

**Accredited training organization** is a guide dog or service dog 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;
- 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;
- 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); or
- An appropriate training organization that meets an equivalent standard as determined by the School Board.

**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,

- 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;
- a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- a mental disorder; or
- 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. If the student is unable to be the handler, a Special Education Teacher Assistant working in the school and/or with the student will be the handler.

**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.

## **2 PURPOSE**

2.1 It is the policy of the Renfrew County District School 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 District uses a variety of placements, 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 District does not provide Guide Dogs, Service Dogs or Service Animals to students.
- Any family considering the purchase of a Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal should meet with the school principal or superintendent before making a commitment.

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

2.3 Pursuant to the Education Act and Regulations, a school building is not a place to which the public is customarily admitted. Pursuant to the Education Act and Ontario Regulation 474/00 Access to School Premises, the Renfrew County District School Board requires each school to have a process for visitors (see AP 191: Use of Service Animals by the Public).

2.4 Any determination of whether a Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal is an appropriate accommodation for a student while receiving education services is a decision of the School Board. A regulated mental 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 at school.

2.5 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 to the Human Rights Code, will the District consider an application for the student who will not be acting as the primary trained Handler of the Guide Dog/Service Dog.

2.6 Only in exceptional circumstances subject to the standards of undue hardship pursuant to the Human Rights Code, will the District consider Service Animals, other than dogs, as an accommodation for the student. Service Animals will only be considered if other reasonable methods of accommodation in the school setting have been unsuccessful in meeting the demonstrated disability-related learning needs of the student.

### **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **School Principals**

3.1 School principals are responsible for the management of the school premises, the staff providing educational programs and the safety of all students.

3.2 School principals have the authority to exclude any animal as an accommodation for a student, including Guide Dogs/Service Dog 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.

3.3 School principals are responsible for making inquiries regarding competing rights and transportation arrangements.

#### **Supervising Principal of Special Services**

3.4 Before admitting a Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal into the school or on school related activities, a parent/adult student must submit a completed application, included in Appendix A of the Procedure.

3.5 On receipt of an application for a Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal, the District On-site Assessment Team shall review the application for completeness and may request any additional information or clarification necessary to assess the request for accommodation.

3.6 The District On-site Assessment Team shall be responsible for the communication with the parent/adult student with respect to the accommodation process, and where approved the implementation and management of the accommodation.

3.7 The Supervising Principal of Special Services shall be responsible for the communication with the parent/adult student with respect to the accommodation process, and where approved the implementation and management of the accommodation.

3.8 The Supervising Principal of Special Services should send out an annual reminder to parents/adult students to update their veterinarian certificate, and renew general liability insurance coverage.

### **On-site Assessment Team**

3.9 Where an application receives preliminary approval, the On-site Assessment Team will meet, and undertake an on-site assessment with the Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal.

### **Parents/Adult Students**

3.10 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 and/or on school related activities. The parent or adult shall be responsible for:

- submitting the completed application at 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;
- obtaining 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 older than three (3) months 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); and
- obtaining general liability insurance providing coverage in an amount specified by the District in the event of an injury or death as a result of the Guide Dog/Service Dog's attendance on the school property or on a school-related activity (to be updated Annually).

### **Students**

3.11 Students will be expected to act as the Guide Dog/Service Dog's primary Handler.

The student Handler must:

- 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's/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; and
- comply with an accommodation plan that addresses the competing rights of others.

### **Guide Dog/Service Dog**

#### 3.12 The Guide Dog/Service Dog:

- shall be a highly trained and certified by Accredited Training Organization;
- will have evidence of training or recertification confirming compliance with training requirements within the last 6 months;
- must be groomed and clean;
- must at all times while on school property be responsive to commands and demonstrate that it can perform the necessary tasks or accommodation;
- must not engage in behavior that puts at risk the safety of others, including other animals, or that creates disruption or distraction in the learning environment;
- such behaviour includes, but is not limited to, growling, nipping, barking, attention seeking, eating (note: any such behaviour is grounds to prohibit the Guide Dog/Service Dog's attendance on school property and in the school building);
- must have control of its biological functions so as not to soil the inside of the buildings, or require feeding during the school day; and
- must demonstrate continuous appropriate behaviour with its Handler and others in the school environment to remain eligible for entry in school buildings or school-related event.

## **4. ASSESSMENT OF THE ACCOMMODATION REQUEST**

4.1 Once the application and all necessary documentation is received, a review will take place by the Supervising Principal of Special Services. Every effort will be made to review the documentation and schedule a meeting in a reasonable timeframe.

4.2 Each request for a Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal will be addressed on an individual basis giving consideration to:

- The individual learning strengths and needs of the student, the student's IEP goals, safety plan, behaviour plan and/or student's medical plan of care (if any);
- Supporting documents such as psychological assessments, occupational or physical therapy assessments, functional behaviour assessments etc.;

- Evidence of how the Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal's attendance at school might provide accommodation for a demonstrated disability-related learning need and/or act of daily living necessary while at school;
- Assessment information provided by a regulated health professional with expertise regarding the student's disability-related needs supporting the request for a Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal;
- The training and certification of the Guide Dog/Service Dog and the student as Handler;
- The impact of the accommodation on the student's dignity, integration and independence;
- Whether one or more alternative accommodations can meet the needs of the student;
- Whether the student's attendance with a Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal might require an increase in the level of staff support provided to the student;
- Whether training will be required for staff and/or the student;
- The impact of the accommodation on the learning environment for the student, other students, including, health, safety, disruption and distraction;
- Any competing human rights of students, staff, and community members using the school pursuant to a permit; and
- The ability to reconcile competing rights.

4.3 The process of accommodation, including inquiries regarding competing rights and notice to the school community, shall respect the student's rights to privacy regarding their disability and specific learning needs and/or needs of daily living.

4.4 Where the student is not the primary Handler, District staff must be trained as the Handler(s) and accompany the student and dog at all times. As a result, such requests will be individually considered, in accordance with the duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship, including consideration of the resources required, alternative accommodations that might meet the student's demonstrated disability-related learning needs, and the impact on the staff and other students.

4.5 The determination with respect to the application for a Guide Dog/Service Dog will be communicated to the parent/adult student in writing.

### **Service Animals**

4.6 Service Animals shall only be considered when reasonable methods of accommodation in the school setting have been unsuccessful in meeting the demonstrated disability-related learning needs of the student.

4.7 The accommodation process following a request by a parent/adult student for a Service Animal shall be consistent with the process noted above.

- If the animal is a species other than a dog, special considerations may arise, including the ability to be trained, necessary biological functions, the capacity for the animal to respond to commands, whether the animal may be kept on a leash/harness/crate/mat and how such restrictions might impact accommodation.

4.8 The determination with respect to the application for a Service Animal will be communicated to the parent/adult student in writing in accordance.

## **5. IMPLEMENTING THE ACCOMMODATION**

5.1 A successful application will be granted preliminary approval by the Supervising Principal of Special Services.

5.2 Upon preliminary approval, the Supervising Principal of Special Services will form an On-site Assessment Team to meet with relevant parties.

5.3 Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal and Handler will undergo a multi day on-site assessment at the school to ensure that the Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal does not pose a risk to the safety of students and staff, or cause disruption to the learning environment.

5.4 Upon successful completion of the on-site assessment, full approval will be granted.

5.5 Where the full approval is granted, the school principal in consultation with the student's educational team, will do the following:

- Make changes to the student's IEP goals and/or student's medical plan of care;
- Organize an orientation session for the school staff, students and the student Handler;
- Develop a timeline identifying a bio-break, water break, location/process to be followed during instructional and non-instructional times;
- Develop emergency procedures, to include a fire exit plan, lockdown plan, evacuation plan;
- Send a notice to the community via a letter to parents, and provide appropriate communication and notices that a Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal may be providing service to the student;
- Arrange an appropriate introduction for the Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal;
- Assist in making arrangements for transportation of the Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service animal to and from the school, if necessary;
  - If the Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal will be accompanying the student on a school vehicle, inquiries must be made regarding competing rights, the transportation plan must specify where the Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal is on board.
  - Documentation about the Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal will be included with route information so that new or substitute bus drives are aware of the Guide Dogs/Service Dogs or Service Animal's presence.
  - Specialized transportation shall not be provided solely for the purpose of enabling the Guide Dog/Service Dog or Service Animal to travel to and from school with the student.

5.6 Where the full approval is granted, the school principal in consultation with the student's educational team, may do the following:

- Limit access to certain activities, areas of the school, or certain times of the day, including but not limited to, where exclusion is required pursuant to the Health Protection and Promotion Act or the Food Safety and Quality Act 2001, which prohibit animals from being places where food is prepared, processed or handled; and
- Require assessment by the school District's health and safety office for health and safety issues applicable to different areas/activities in the school.

## **6. CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT**

6.1 A review of the effectiveness of the Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal shall be undertaken:

- As part of each review of the student's IEP.
- In the event of a Violent Incident Report.
- As otherwise deemed necessary by the Principal.

6.2 Approval may be revoked at any time by the Principal if:

- There are any concerns for the health and safety of students, staff or the Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal.
- There has been a change to the student's circumstances or disability-related needs, which had supported the original approval or a change to the needs of the students/staff such that there is a new competing right.
- The Board in its discretion determines that the accommodation is not effective for the student's demonstrated disability-related learning needs or acts of daily living.

6.3 The Handler will be required to remove the Guide Dog/Service Dog/Service Animal from the classroom immediately if there is behaviour that is distracting, disruptive or aggressive, including making noise, failing to follow commands, growling or nipping. In the event that this behavior occurs, the student's parent/guardian will be called to pick up the Guide Dog/Service Dog/Service Animal from the school. Alternative options for accommodation will be discussed.

## **7. RECORDS AND INFORMATION COLLECTION**

7.1 A copy of the application and confirmation of approval, as well as any other relevant documents supporting the accommodation shall be retained in the student's Ontario Student Record.

7.2 The District shall be required to collect, use and disclose the personal information of the student in order to fulfill the accommodation process. Notice of the collection, use and disclosure must be provided by the parent/adult student. Efforts should be made to limit the personal information to only that which is necessary.

7.3 Under PPM 163 School Board Policies on Service Animals, the District is required to collect information regarding the implementation of the policy and procedure regarding Guide Dogs and Service Animals, including:

- Total number of requests for students to be accompanied by Guide Dog/Service Dogs/Service Animals;
- Whether requests are for elementary or secondary school students;
- The student's grade;
- Whether the student is the Handler;
- The number of requests approved and denied:
- If denied, the rationale for the decision, including a description of other supports and/or services provided to the student to support their access to the Ontario Curriculum;
- Species of Service Animals requested and approved; and
- Types of needs being supported; emotional, social, psychological, physical.

## **8. FOOD AREAS**

Regulation 493/17, of Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act, allows Guide Dogs and Service Animals in areas where food is served, sold, and offered for sale. Steps should be taken to ensure that Guide Dogs and Service Animals in school cafeterias, or areas where students are consuming food, are not disruptive and do not eat student food. No animals are allowed in areas where food is prepared, processed, or handled such as the kitchen of the school cafeteria or the hospitality classroom.

## **9. SOURCES**

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

## **11. RELATED FORMS & LETTERS**

### **Forms**

[Appendix A: F192-1 Application Request for Guide Dog / Service Dog](#)

[Appendix B: F192-2 Acceptance of Responsibility for Guide Dog/Service Animal](#)

[Appendix C: F192-3 Management Plan for Care of Guide Dog/Service Animal](#)

[Appendix D: F192-4 Guide Dog/Service Animal Checklist for Principals](#)

## **Letters**

[Sample Letter Acknowledgement of Request for Guide Dog/Service Animal](#)

[Sample Letter Approval the Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal](#)

[Sample Letter to the School Community and Families](#)

[Sample Letter Denial of Guide Dog / Service Animal](#)

## **Procedure History**

Approved:	Feb 2022
Reviewed:	Feb 2022
Revised:	Feb 2022