

SERVICE DOGS

Background

The Division supports the use of service dogs as an intervention strategy recognized as an aid to children with diverse needs.

Definition

The Alberta Service Dogs Act defines a Service Dog as “a dog trained as a guide for a disabled person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations”. Service Dogs are working animals allowed full public access in Alberta and are trained to meet the specific needs of students with whom they have been partnered. Service Dogs may provide services to students diagnosed with disabilities such as physical disabilities, blind or low vision, deaf/hearing impaired, autism spectrum disorder, or a seizure disorder.

Procedures

The following procedures will be followed for admittance of a Service Dog to a school.

1. Parent/Guardian(s) Responsibilities

The parent/guardian(s) shall:

- 1.1 Provide a letter to the Principal indicating that the student has been approved for a Service Dog and include reasons, descriptions of activity, and the benefits of having a Service Dog attend school with their child. This letter is to be supplied to the Principal as early as possible in the process to allow for sufficient planning and transition of the Service Dog into the school setting.
- 1.2 Provide a letter from a physician or psychologist confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need, including a recommendation for the use of a Service Dog.
- 1.3 Ensure that the Service Dog meets the qualification requirements under the Alberta Service Dogs Qualifications Regulation, which reads as follows:
“A dog that has qualifications resulting from the successful completion of a training program delivered by a school or institution that is accredited by, or that has candidacy status with, Assistance Dogs International, Inc. has the qualifications of a Service Dog for the purposes of the Act.”
- 1.4 Provide detailed information and contact information from the agency training and supplying the Service Dog.
- 1.5 Work collaboratively with the Principal, Division and school staff to ensure successful integration and ongoing support for the Service Dog.
- 1.6 Assume all financial obligations regarding the use and care of the Service Dog.

- 1.7 Annually provide the Principal with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, a municipal Service Dog license, and confirmation that the Service Dog is in good health.

2. Principal's Responsibilities

The Principal shall:

- 2.1 Provide a copy of the Division Service Dog Administrative Procedure to the parent/guardian(s) of the student.
- 2.2 Inform the Superintendent that a written request has been made for Service Dog admittance to the school.
- 2.3 Ensure that the use of a Service Dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the student's Individual Program Plan (IPP).
- 2.4 Consult with the Superintendent or designate and school staff prior to arranging a conference with the parent/guardian(s).
- 2.5 Meet with the parent/guardian(s) to review the requirements in the Service Dog Administrative Procedure and discuss the Administrative Procedure requirements and the potential transition of the Service Dog into the school setting.
- 2.6 Conduct a meeting with the parent/guardian(s), classroom teacher(s), and appropriate Learning Supports staff to review the provision of a Service Dog and to develop a plan to determine:
 - 2.6.1 The purpose and function of the Service Dog;
 - 2.6.2 Who will accompany and handle the Service Dog outside;
 - 2.6.3 Personal care and physical needs of the Service Dog;
 - 2.6.3.1 The safest and most environmentally sound place for the Service Dog to relieve itself;
 - 2.6.3.2 Removal and disposal of animal waste;
 - 2.6.3.3 Provision of a suitable container for waste that the dog handler can access; and
 - 2.6.3.4 Considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather;
 - 2.6.4 Classroom considerations such as seating arrangements and changes to class placements;
 - 2.6.5 Any necessary changes in routine and procedures, and program changes;
 - 2.6.6 Arrangements for the Service Dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site;
 - 2.6.7 A transition plan for the Service Dog and the student;
 - 2.6.8 A timetable for the introduction of the Service Dog to the school and classroom(s) and for the training of the student's school team;
 - 2.6.9 Rules of conduct around the Service Dog for students, staff, and the public; and
 - 2.6.10 Methods of disseminating and regulating such rules.

- 2.7 Communicate in writing to members of the school community that a Service Dog will be entering the school setting to elicit information regarding possible issues such as allergies or phobias from students, staff members and parent/guardian(s). This communication will be sent early in the process to determine any alternate arrangements that may be necessary to reasonably accommodate students or staff members.
- 2.8 Consult extensively with support staff, custodians, school staff, the School Council and the school community prior to the Service Dog arriving at school. During the consultation process within the broader school community, the anonymity of the student and the family will be protected.
- 2.9 Liaise with stakeholders to resolve specific concerns or issues that may arise regarding the presence of a Service Dog in the school.

3. Implementation Procedures and Transition Plan

The Principal, parent/guardian(s), teacher and other staff members, as required, will work collaboratively to create a transition plan to assist in the integration of the Service Dog into the school environment. This transition plan will:

- 3.1 Provide for the Service Dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site.
- 3.2 Establish who will accompany and handle the Service Dog with the student.
- 3.3 Establish considerations and protocols for seasonal changes and inclement weather.
- 3.4 Establish the safest and most environmentally sound place for the Service Dog to relieve itself and who will be responsible for removal and disposal of animal waste.
- 3.5 Determine parent/guardian(s) or a staff member who will be responsible for the provision of a suitable container for the animal's waste.
- 3.6 Ensure that the parent/guardian(s) is informed that the provision of a Service Dog and any objects/care it requires is the financial responsibility of the parent/guardian(s) or adult student.
- 3.7 Arrange for the parent/guardian(s) dog handler to train and instruct the support staff and teacher on the proper procedure regarding the Service Dog (for example: specific commands, skills, etc.).
 - 3.7.1 Establish an alternative dog handler for instances when the dog handler is absent.
- 3.8 Establish any necessary changes to routine, procedures, or programming that need to be made prior to the Service Dog's entry.
- 3.9 Establish rules of conduct around the Service Dog for students, staff, and the public.
- 3.10 Revise emergency procedures as required to include the Service Dog, such as fire drills, evacuations, lock-downs, and notification to the fire department regarding the existence of the Service Dog.
- 3.11 Notify the Transportation Services Manager as required to advise drivers and any students who may be sharing transportation where the Service Dog will be present.

- 3.12 Arrange for an assembly or meeting of all students in the school to provide education, awareness, and information about the Service Dog and its role prior to the Service Dog's arrival. Once the Service Dog has arrived, arrange for a "welcome assembly" to introduce the Service Dog to the school community.
- 3.13 Arrange for signage alerting school visitors to the Service Dog's presence, placed in a visible location on the doors of the school.
- 3.14 Ensure that the Service Dog and related goals are incorporated into the IPP of the student as appropriate.

Adopted/Revised: JUN 2016/NOV 2019

Reference: Section 3, 11, 31, 32, 33, 52, 53, 196, 197, 204, 222, 225 Education Act
Alberta Human Rights Act
Alberta Service Dogs Act
Blind Person's Rights Act
Alberta Service Dogs Qualifications Regulation 197/2008 consolidated up to 34/2015