

Use of Service Dogs in Schools for Students with Special Needs Procedure

RATIONALE:

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is committed to ensuring the provision of plans, programs, and/or services that will enable students with health or medical needs to attend and participate in school.

All health support services must be administered in a manner that respects, to the degree possible in the circumstances, the student's right to privacy, dignity, and cultural sensitivity.

TERMINOLOGY:

Service Dog: A service dog is a dog that is being used because of a student's disability and this is either readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a physician or nurse. They are trained to assist students with their daily living activities. The use of service dogs is an intervention strategy that is recognized as an aid to students with special needs.

Examples of service dogs include dogs used by people who have vision loss, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety.

It is "readily apparent" that a dog is a service dog when it is obvious by its appearance or by what it is doing. For example, it may be readily apparent that a dog is a service dog if it is wearing a harness, saddle bags, a sign that identifies it as a service dog or has a certificate or identification card from a service animal training school or an identification card from the Attorney General of Ontario. It may also be readily apparent if the student is using the animal to assist him or her in doing things, such as opening doors or retrieving items.

Service dogs must be registered in Canada. They will generally have a black leather Special Skills Dog (SSD) harness and leash, and/or saddlebag or vest. They are given to individuals with the following disabilities: Physical, Blind or Low Vision, Deaf/Hearing Impaired, Autism Spectrum Disorder or a seizure disorder.

PROCEDURES:

1.0 Responsibility

- 1.1 Principals will ensure that all staff, students and others are properly trained in how to interact with the student who is accompanied by a service dog.

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2.0 Process

- 2.1 Once the school has been notified, the procedure that follows will be put into place prior to the admittance of a service dog to the school.

3.0 Parental Process

- 3.1 Provide a letter to the school requesting permission for a service dog and outlining the benefits of having a service dog attend school with their child.
- 3.2 Provide a letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, or from a member of the College of Psychologists confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need, including a recommendation for the use of a service dog.
- 3.3 Provide a Certificate of Training for the service dog from the National Service Dogs Training Centre, or from another certified training centre.
- 3.4 Pay for any financial implications regarding the use and care of the service dog.
- 3.5 Annually, provide the school with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, a municipal service dog licence, and confirmation that the service dog is in good health.
- 3.6 Arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the service dog, including a once a day bio-break procedure.

4.0 Principal Process

- 4.1 Ensure that the use of a service dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the IPRC and/or IEP process.
- 4.2 Consult with the appropriate Superintendent of Education and the Superintendent of Special Education / Student Services prior to setting a meeting to discuss use of a service dog.
- 4.3 Arrange a meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s), classroom teacher(s), Special Education consultant, a representative of the service dog provider, the student (where appropriate), and other staff determined necessary, to discuss and develop a plan to determine:
 - 4.3.1 The purpose and function of the service dog;
 - 4.3.2 Who will accompany and handle the service dog outside;

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- 4.3.3 Personal care and physical needs of the service dog, such as:
 - the safest and most environmentally sound place for the service dog to relieve itself;
 - removal and disposal of animal waste;
 - provision of a suitable container for waste that the dog handler can access, and
 - considerations for seasonal changes, and inclement weather.
- 4.3.4 Classroom considerations such as seating arrangements;
- 4.3.5 Any necessary changes in routine and procedures, and program changes;
- 4.3.6 Arrangements for the service dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site;
- 4.3.7 A transition plan for the service dog and the student;
- 4.3.8 A timetable for the introduction of the service dog to the school and class;
- 4.3.9 A timetable for the training of the student's school team (i.e., principal; teacher(s); educational assistant(s); etc.)
- 4.3.10 Rules of conduct around the service dog for students, staff, and the public; and
- 4.3.11 Methods for disseminating and regulating such rules.
- 4.4 Inform all staff and the school council regarding the presence of the service dog.
- 4.5 Liaise with the appropriate Superintendent of Education and/or Special Education consultant to resolve any specific concerns or issues raised regarding the presence of a service dog.
- 4.6 Arrange for demonstrations by the service dog provider for the student body, staff, and/or the community as deemed necessary to provide education and awareness of the service dog in the school.
- 4.7 If applicable, ensure that the Manager: Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services is contacted regarding any transportation requirements.
- 4.8 Revise emergency procedures as required to include the service dog (ex., notification to the Fire Department regarding the existence of the service dog).

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4.9 Post signs on each entry door of the school to advise visitors of the presence of a working service dog.

4.10 Inform the school's Superintendent and the Superintendent responsible for Special Education Services that a Service Dog is in place at the school, and, when/if the Service Dog is no longer going to be at the school.

5.0 Communication

5.1 Letters will be distributed (samples attached) as follows to inform:

5.1.1 The school community of the arrival of the service dog, its purpose, and rules regarding conduct around the service dog;

5.1.2 The families of the students in any of the classes where the service dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, phobias, or religious considerations from the students' families;

5.1.3 The families of any students who will be sharing transportation where the service dog will be present, where applicable.

5.2 All information regarding the service dog will be retained in the student's OSR.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE FAMILIES OF CHILDREN IN THE CLASS(ES)
(SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)

Date:

Dear Parent / Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a service dog in our school assisting one of our students, and this student and the service dog will be a part of your child's class.

This 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 service dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

There will be information sessions at the school to integrate the service dog into our daily routines and all our students will be instructed as to the proper procedure regarding the service dog. They will be informed that the service dog is a working service dog and not a pet while at school.

If you have any specific questions regarding the presence of the service dog in your child's class, please contact me at the school.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Sincerely,

Principal

**SAMPLE LETTER TO THOSE SHARING TRANSPORTATION
(SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)**

Date:

Dear Parent / Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a service dog in our school assisting one of our students, and this student and that the service dog will be sharing transportation with your child daily to and from school.

This 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 service dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

There will be information sessions at the school to integrate the service dog into our daily routines and all our students will be instructed as to the proper procedure regarding the service dog. They will be informed that the service dog is a working service dog and not a pet while at school.

If you have any specific questions regarding the presence of the service dog on your child's mode of transportation, please contact me at the school.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Sincerely,

Principal

HWDSB

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. Should the student be bussed, the Principal will contact the General Manager of the Hamilton Wentworth Student Transportation Services to plan for the dog to be on the bus.
- 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 identification card for guide dog;
 - ii. Copy of registration with a recognized training centre for dog or identification card for guide dog which includes confirmation of Service Dog Public Access Test
 - 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: _____