

## Use of Certified 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:**

*Certified Service Dog (CSD):* A Certified Service Dog is a trained animal that is considered an accommodation strategy which is required by a student with a disability to access the curriculum. Certified Service Dogs are trained by organizations that are members of and accredited by *Assistance Dogs International* or *The International Guide Dog Federation*. A Certified Service Dog has participated in extended training with a professional service dog trainer or a recognized service animal training centre with service dog training experience for the specific disability to be accommodated. Such a dog must have passed the Assistance Dog Public Access Certification Test or an equivalent test. A Certified Service Dog is a working dog. It is not the same as a companion or therapy dog.

Certified 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.

### **Consideration for Approval of a Certified Service Dog on School Premises**

Requests for use of a Certified Service Dog will be evaluated on an individual basis. Where a family wishes to request a Certified Service Dog as an accommodation for their child, the parent or guardian will meet with the Principal and the Special Education Consultant. All information related to a particular case will be considered and assessed. This will include the disability-related needs of the student requesting the assistance of the Certified Service Animal, the supports and strategies already in place to accommodate the student, and other potential supports and strategies that could be in place to access meaningful education.

The Principal will clarify that the parent/guardian request is for a Certified Service Dog as defined above. The Principal will review the request with the relevant School Superintendent. Factors to be considered when assessing the request for a Certified Service Dog as a student accommodation will include: the student's disability and individual needs, the needs of peers and staff.

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### PROCEDURES:

The procedure that follows will be put into place prior to the admittance of a Certified Service Dog to the school.

#### **1.0 Pre-Approval Process**

##### **Parent/Guardian**

- 1.1 Complete the *Parent/Guardian Request for Certified Service Dog Involvement with a Student* form. A letter which outlines the benefits of having a Certified Service Dog attend school with their child, including information on how the Certified Service Dog will accommodate the student's disability related needs, should accompany the form.
- 1.2 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 disability and related needs, including a recommendation for the use of a Certified Service Dog.
- 1.3 Provide a Certificate of Training (which includes confirmation that it has passed the Assistance Dog Public Access Certification Test) for the Certified Service Dog from the National Service Dogs Training Centre, or from another certified training centre that is accredited by Assistance Dogs International or The International Guide Dog Federation.

##### **Principal**

- 1.4 Arrange a meeting with the parent/guardian and Special Education Consultant to receive the required documentation.
- 1.5 Ensure that the use of a Certified Service Dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the IPRC and/or IEP process.
- 1.6 Consult with the appropriate School Superintendent and the Superintendent responsible for Special Education Services following the meeting with parent/guardian to discuss use of a Certified Service Dog.

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### 2.0 Post-Approval Process

Once approval has been granted, the procedure noted below will be followed.

#### Parent/Guardian

- 2.1 Pay for any financial implications regarding the use and care of the Certified Service Dog.
- 2.2 Annually, provide the school with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, a municipal Certified Service Dog licence, and confirmation that the Certified Service Dog is in good health.
- 2.3 Arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the Certified Service Dog, including a once a day bio-break procedure.

#### Principal

- 2.4 Arrange a meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s), classroom teacher(s), Special Education Consultant, a representative of the Certified Service Dog provider, the student (where appropriate), and other staff determined necessary, to discuss and develop a plan to determine:
  - 2.4.1 The purpose and function of the Certified Service Dog;
  - 2.4.2 Who will accompany and handle the Certified Service Dog outside;
  - 2.4.3 Personal care and physical needs of the Certified Service Dog, such as:
    - the safest and most environmentally sound place for the Certified 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.
  - 2.4.4 Classroom considerations such as seating arrangements;
  - 2.4.5 Any necessary changes in routine and procedures, and program changes;
  - 2.4.6 Arrangements for the Certified Service Dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site;
  - 2.4.7 A transition plan for the Certified Service Dog and the student;

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- 2.4.8 Ensure that all staff, students and others are properly trained by the Service Animal Training Centre Ontario, how to interact with the student who is accompanied by a Certified Service Dog;
- 2.4.9 A timetable for the introduction of the Certified Service Dog to the school and class;
- 2.4.10 A timetable for the training of the student's school team (i.e., principal; teacher(s); educational assistant(s); etc.)
- 2.4.11 Rules of conduct around the Certified Service Dog for students, staff, and the public; and
- 2.4.12 Methods for disseminating and regulating such rules.
- 2.5 Inform all staff and the school council regarding the presence of the Certified Service Dog.
- 2.6 Liaise with the appropriate School Superintendent to resolve any specific concerns or issues raised regarding the presence of a service dog.
- 2.7 Arrange for demonstrations by the Certified Service Dog provider for the student body, staff, and/or the community as deemed necessary to provide education and awareness of the Certified Service Dog in the school.
- 2.8 If applicable, ensure that the Manager: Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services is contacted regarding any transportation requirements.
- 2.9 Revise emergency procedures as required to include the Certified Service Dog (e.g., notification to the Fire Department regarding the existence of the Certified Service Dog).
- 2.10 Post signs on each entry door of the school to advise visitors of the presence of a working Certified Service Dog.
- 2.11 Ensure ongoing and regular assessment to determine whether the student is better able to access the curriculum since the introduction of the Certified Service Dog.
- 2.12 Revise the IEP to reflect the accommodation of the Certified Service Dog.
- 2.13 Inform the school's Superintendent and the Superintendent responsible for Special Education Services that a Certified Service Dog is in place at the school, and, when/if the Certified Service Dog is no longer going to be at the school.

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### **3.0 Communication**

- 3.1 Letters will be distributed (samples attached) as follows to inform:
  - 3.1.1 The school community of the arrival of the Certified Service Dog, its purpose, and rules regarding conduct around the Certified Service Dog;
  - 3.1.2 The families of the students in any of the classes where the Certified Service Dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, phobias, or religious considerations from the students' families;
  - 3.1.3 The families of any students who will be sharing transportation where the Certified Service Dog will be present, where applicable.
- 3.2 All information regarding the Certified 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 Certified Service Dog in our school helping one of our students to access the Ontario Curriculum and assist with their learning. The Certified Service Dog will be in your child's class.

This Certified Service Dog is a highly trained companion for our student. The child's right to have a Certified Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

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

If you have any specific questions regarding the presence of the Certified 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 Certified Service Dog in our school helping one of our students to access the Ontario Curriculum and assist with their learning. The Certified Service Dog will be travelling on your child's bus daily to and from school.

This Certified Service Dog is a highly trained companion for our student. The child's right to have a Certified Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

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

If you have any specific questions regarding the presence of the Certified 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

## PARENT/GUARDIAN REQUEST for CERTIFIED 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 Certified Service Dog at school and at school-related activities.
2. The Certified Service Dog will provide the student with: (please list)
  
3. Length of time the student and the Certified Service 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 Certified Service Dog issues): (please list)
  
6. I/We understand that it is our responsibility to:
  - Walk the Certified Service 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 Certified Service Dog to be on the bus.
  - Provide the required equipment and Certified Service Dog care items to support daily care at school.
  - Provide an adult from the family or designate to be available on a consistent basis to take the Certified Service Dog for a "bio-break" at least one time per day preferably mid-day.
  - Assume financial responsibility for the training of the Certified Service 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.



- Copy of Recommendation for Certified Service Dog or identification card;
- Copy of registration with a recognized training centre for Certified Service Dog or identification card which includes confirmation of Service Dog Public Access Test
- Copy of current, official Vaccination Certificate for the Certified Service Dog;
- Proof of municipal Certified Service Dog license, if applicable;
- Documentation from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons; and
- Copy of training certification of Parent(s)/Guardian(s).
- 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: \_\_\_\_\_

**ACCOMMODATION PLAN for the CARE of the CERTIFIED SERVICE DOG**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

O.E.N: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Certified Service Dog: \_\_\_\_\_

Trained Handler or Designate (not school staff): \_\_\_\_\_

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**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 Certified Service 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: \_\_\_\_\_