



PROCEDURE

Title: **USE OF SERVICE AND GUIDE DOGS** Procedure No.: **5012e**
BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC Effective Date: **2009 Dec 15**

Department: Learning Support Services

Reference(s): Policy 5012 - Accessibility Standards for Customer Service
Education Act
Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001
Ontario Human Rights Code
Blind Person's Rights Act
Individual Education Plan: A Resource Guide 2004

1.0 Statement

The use of specially trained service / guide dogs is one strategy used to accommodate the special needs of individuals with disabilities. This procedure provides direction to principals / supervisors regarding the admittance and implementation of service dogs into the school / work environment.

The success of the implementation of a service / guide dog depends on clear communication, a well-informed school / work community and careful planning. The information provided will assist the principal / supervisor to make the best possible decisions for the individual with disabilities as well as for the students, staff, volunteers, and visitors in the school.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 ***Accredited training organization*** for a guide dog or service animal is accreditation by:

- a) 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;
- b) 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; or

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c) 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).

2.2 Service Dog:

A dog which has been certified after successfully completing a training program provided by an Accredited Training Organization.

2.3 Guide Dog:

A dog trained as a guide for a blind / low vision person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations pursuant to the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*.

2.4 Disability:

- a) 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 co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or in a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- d) a mental disorder; or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

3.0 Access to Board Premises

- 3.1 A school is not a public space and is not generally accessible to the public. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) does *not* apply to the public's use of a service / guide dog when accessing education services in school buildings.
- 3.2 Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a service / guide dog will be welcomed on board and / or school premises with their service / guide dog and be accompanied by the service / guide dog while on the premises. Access will be in accordance with normal security procedures.

- 3.3 This requirement applies only to those areas of the premises where the public or third parties customarily have access and does not include places or areas of the school or board offices where the public does not have access.
- 3.4 Access to classrooms for service dogs used by students is covered under separate specific procedures entitled Student Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals Procedure 5018a.

4.0 **Exclusion of Service / Guide Dog**

- 4.1 A service / guide dog can only be excluded from access to the premises where this is required by another law. Examples may include the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and the *Ontario Food Safety and Quality Act*.

The former *Act* prohibits service / guide dogs in places where food is prepared, processed, or handled (e.g., kitchen of school cafeteria or culinary arts classroom) although service dogs are permitted where food is served and sold (e.g., school cafeteria or lunchroom).

- 4.2 Where there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of a service / guide dog, consideration must be given to options available prior to exclusion of a service / guide dog. An example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the dog. It is the Board's expectation that the situation be fully analyzed and all measures to eliminate the risk be considered, e.g., creating distance between the two individuals concerned, making reasonable alterations to schedules, etc.
- 4.3 A service / guide dog can be excluded if it is a breed that is prohibited by law. An example would be the *Ontario Dog Owners' Liability Act*, which places restrictions on pit bull terriers.

5.0 **Alternate Measures if Service / Guide Dog Must be Excluded**

- 5.1 In the rare instance where a service / guide dog must be excluded, the Board must make every effort to put alternative arrangements in place to provide the services required by the person with a disability. This could involve leaving the animal in a secure area where it is permitted by law and discussing with the person how best to serve them, e.g., a person with a vision disability might need someone (a member of staff or volunteer) to guide them.

6.0 Where it is Necessary to Confirm a Dog is a Service / Guide Dog

- 6.1 The school principal or site manager may, prior to permitting the animal access to Thames Valley District School Board property, request that the owner of the service / guide dog provide a copy of the certificate, not more than 6 months old, confirming the service / guide dog's training by a training organization accredited by the International Guide Dog Federation, or Assistance Dogs International, or an attestation of compliance with the MSAR Standard for Training.
- 6.2 Where a dog is not a trained service / guide dog and it is not readily apparent that the dog is a service dog, the school or board staff member may ask the person using the service / guide dog for a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the dog is needed because of a disability. The letter does not need to identify the disability, why the dog is needed or how it is used.
- 6.3 Where the person using the service / guide dog regularly attends at the school or board facility, the principal or supervisor may request to keep a copy of the letter on file but only as long as required by the circumstances. Alternatively, the person using the service / guide dog may be asked to bring a letter with them on occasions when they visit the premises. The confidentiality of the information in the letter is protected by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.