

Title: **SERVICE ANIMALS FOR STUDENTS**

Adopted: June 2020

Reviewed: October 2026

Authority: Ontario PPM 163: School Board Policies on Service Animals

Related: Policy – Service Animals SHSM 010

References: Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (the “AODA”)
Ontario Human Rights Commission’s *Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities* (2018)
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
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

PROCEDURE

The purpose of this procedure is to provide direction to the school staff regarding the admittance and integration of Certified Service Animals into the school environment for the benefit of a student.

BACKGROUND

1. Certified Service Animals, for the purpose of this procedure, includes all trained (by an accredited training facility) and registered service animals who are handled by a student with a disability. The student who receives the animal’s services to assist with daily living activities and/or access to the Ontario curriculum, which is readily apparent (obvious by the animal’s appearance or what it is doing) or identified as a requirement in a letter from a physician or nurse.
2. Certified Service Animal 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).
3. 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.

4. The School Authority does not provide Guide Dogs, Service Dogs or Certified Service Animals to students.
5. A Certified Service Animal is a working animal and does not interact with employees or other students.
6. The “Handler” (animal handler) for the purpose of this procedure is the student with disability related needs for whom the Certified Service Animal is performing services and who is managing and is responsible for the Certified Service Animal’s performance of those services. In most cases, it is the expectation of the Authority that the student utilizing a Certified Service Animal will be the animal’s Handler.
7. When a Certified Service Animal is being considered by a family as an accommodation for their child, the parent/guardian may wish to consider meeting with the school Principal prior to making a commitment to receive the animal from an agency.
8. The approval of the Certified Service Animal will be decided after extensive consultation and is not automatic. Decisions regarding the admittance and integration of Certified Service Animals into the school environment for the benefit of a student are made on a case-by-case basis.
9. Certified 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.
10. When parent(s)/guardian(s) request that their child use a Certified Service Animal in school, the Principal must review the request.
11. The process of accommodation shall also consider the competing human rights of other students and of staff; the impact of the Certified Service Animal on the learning environment; and the health and safety of all individuals who are or might be in the school, on school grounds or at a school-related event.
12. Where necessary in the decision-making process, rights and needs of one person may have to be balanced against the rights and needs of another.
13. Upon approval, the Principal will schedule a School Support Team meeting. The parent(s)/guardian(s) are expected to attend and provide input to ensure a safe and smooth transition for all.
14. Where the use of a Certified Service Animal in school has been approved, the animal may be excluded from access to the school or part of the school when:
 - a) There is a risk to the health of students/staff or the physical or mental wellbeing of students as a result of the presence of the Certified Service Animal.
 - b) The Certified Service Animal is a breed that is prohibited by law. (e.g. pit-bull)
 - c) There has been a material change in the circumstances that led to the original approval of the use of the Certified Service Animals in school; or
 - d) Exclusion is otherwise required by law.

15. Where the student is not the handler, an adult must be trained and must provide supervision and handling of the service animal. As a result, requests to permit the Certified Service Animal to attend and be integrated into the school environment will be considered individually, in accordance with the duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship pursuant to the Human Rights Code. Adult handlers must comply with the normal security and screening procedures for volunteers.
16. Factors to be considered include, but are not limited to:
- a) the student's demonstrated disability related needs;
 - b) the accommodation(s) that may be provided by the Certified Service Animal to meet the student's disability related needs;
 - c) alternative accommodations available that meet the student's demonstrated disability related needs;
 - d) the impact on the classroom and school.
17. Certified Service Animals are permitted where food is served and sold (e.g. cafeteria or lunchroom), but not where food is prepared.

Parent Process

Parents must provide the following:

18. An application (see Form EQ #12 – 1) to the school Principal requesting permission for a Certified Service Animal and outlining the purpose and benefits of having a Certified Service Animal attend school with their child, including details of the way the Certified Service Animal will accommodate the student's demonstrated disability related needs. (e.g. providing guidance in hallways) and assist the student in achieving their learning goals and/or goals of daily living while at school.
19. A letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, a member of the College of Psychologists, or nurse qualified in a discipline relevant to the person's disability confirming the recognized disability and related special needs, including a recommendation for the use of a Certified Service Animal.
20. An up-to-date Certificate of Training for the Certified Service Animal and the Handler from the National Service.
21. A commitment to pay for any financial implications regarding the use and care of the Certified Service Animal, which may include training for staff, training from time to time for the Certified Service Animal and Handler and all costs related to the animal, food, grooming, harness, crate and/or mat and veterinary care.
22. An annual update to the school with proof of a municipal Certified Service Animal license.

23. A certificate not greater than three (3) months old 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).
24. General liability insurance providing coverage in the event of an injury or death as a result of the Certified Service Animal's attendance on school property or on a school-related activity (to be updated annually)
25. Arrangements for the personal care and physical needs of the Certified Service Animal, including a once-a-day bio-break procedure, if necessary.

Principal Process

The Principal must

26. Ensure that the animal is a Certified Service Animal and that use by the student who is the Handler is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the IPRC and/or IEP process.
27. Consult with the appropriate school staff and school council prior to setting a meeting to discuss use of a Certified Service Animal.
28. Advise the appropriate hospital management staff that an application has been made for the use of a service animal by a student.
29. Make appropriate inquiries regarding any potential severe allergies, anxieties or religious objections with respect to animals and possible accommodation plans to meet competing rights.
30. Arrange a meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s), classroom teacher(s), a representative of the Certified Service Animal provider, the student (if appropriate), and other staff determined necessary.
31. Consider the necessary factors to be taken into account when making a case-by-case determination, including:
 - a) any documentation on how the service animal supports the student's learning needs and/or disability-related needs, including documentation from the student's medical professionals;
 - b) the disability-related needs and learning needs of the student
 - c) the impact of the accommodation on the student's dignity, integration and independence;
 - d) whether one or more alternative accommodations can meet the needs of the student;
 - e) whether the student's attendance with a Certified Service Animal might require an increase in the level of staff support provided to the student;

- f) whether training will be required for staff and/or the student;
- g) the impact of the accommodation on the learning environment for the student, other students, including, health, safety, disruption and distraction;
- h) any competing human rights of students, staff, and community members using the school pursuant to a permit;
- i) recommendations for accommodation plans to reconcile competing rights.
- j) any training or certification of the Certified Service Animal;
- k) any special considerations that may arise
- l) The privacy rights of a student seeking to bring a Certified Service Animal to the school

32. Collaborate with all concerned to develop a plan which must include:

- a) The purpose and function of the Certified Service Animal;
- b) Training provided for the Handler (student) and the Certified Service Animal;
- c) Personal care and physical needs of the Certified Service Animal, such as;
 - The safest and most environmentally sound place for the Certified Service Animal to relieve itself;
 - Removal and disposal of animal waste;
 - Provision of a suitable container for waste that the Handler can access, and
 - Considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather.
- d) Classroom considerations such as seating arrangements
- e) Any necessary changes in routine and procedures, and program changes;
- f) Arrangements for the Certified Service Animal to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site;
- g) A transition plan for the Certified Service Animal and the student, staff or volunteer;
- h) A timetable for the introduction of the Certified Service Animal to the school and class;
- i) A timetable for the training of the student's school team (i.e., principal; teacher(s); education assistants)
- j) Rules of conduct around the Certified Service Animal for students, staff and the public; and

- k) Methods for disseminating and regulating such rules.
- l) How the Certified Service Animal will be readily identifiable (e.g. coat, bib)
- m) Timeline for implementation.

33. Where approval is granted, the school Principal in consultation with the student's educational team, will do the following:

- a) make changes to the student's IEP goals and/or student's medical plan of care. (This may include making changes to the accommodation on an interim trial basis, in which case the indicators of success or lack of success for this form of accommodation will be identified before the trial period begins)
- b) organize an orientation session for school staff, students and the student Handler;
- c) Inform all staff and the school council regarding the presence of the Certified Service Animal.
- d) Liaise with appropriate staff to resolve any specific concerns or issues raised regarding the presence of a Certified Service Animal.
- e) Arrange for demonstrations by the Certified Service Animal provider for the student body, staff, and/or the community as deemed necessary to provide education and awareness of the Certified Service Animal in the school.
- f) If applicable, ensure that the Manager of Student Transportation is contacted regarding any transportation requirements.
- g) Revise emergency procedures as required to include the Certified Service Animal (e.g. notification to the Fire Department regarding the existence of the Certified Service Animal).
- h) Post signs on each entry door of the school to advise visitors of the presence of a working Certified Service Animal.
- i) Inform the Chief Executive Officer that a Certified Service Animal is in place at the school and when/if the Certified Service Animal is no longer going to be at the school.

34. If the animal is not a Certified Service Animal or the student is not a handler and the decision is made that alternative accommodations to meet the student's demonstrated disability related needs are available, the Principal will identify in writing the rationale for the decision.

35. If a process for allowing a Certified Service Animal has been conducted by the Holland Bloorview Rehabilitation Hospital, The Principal will review that process to prevent duplication of effort by the staff or parents.

36. Students will be expected to act as the Certified Service Animal's primary handler. The student handler must:

- a) demonstrate the ability to control the Certified Service Animal in accordance with the training received;
- b) ensure that the Certified Service Animal is always wearing a vest and leash or harness when the animal is not in its crate.
- c) ensure the Certified Service Animal does not disrupt the learning of others with unnecessary movement, vocalization or other behaviour, including aggressive or threatening behaviour;
- d) ensure that the Certified Service Animal's biological needs are addressed;
- e) transition and maintain at all times the Certified Service Animal on a leash, harness, mat and/or crate;
- f) comply with an accommodation plan that addresses the competing rights of others;

37. A Certified Service Animal:

- a) shall be a highly trained and certified by an Accredited Training Organization. Evidence of this training or re-certification confirming compliance with training requirements within the last months may be required;
- b) must be groomed and clean;
- c) must at all times while on school property be responsive to commands and demonstrate that it can perform the necessary tasks or accommodation;
- d) must not engage in behaviour 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;
 - any such behaviour is grounds to prohibit the Certified Service Animal's attendance on school property and in the school building,
- e) must have control of its biological functions so as not to soil the inside of buildings, or require feeding during the school day;
- f) 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 events.

Approval Revoked

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

- a) there are any concerns for the health and safety of students, staff or the Certified Service Animal;
- b) there is behaviour that is distracting, disruptive or aggressive, including making noise, failing to follow commands, growling or nipping. In the event that this behaviour occurs, the Handler will be required to remove the Certified Service Animal from the classroom immediately and the student's parent/guardian will be called to pick up the Certified Service Animal from the school. Alternative options for accommodation will be discussed.
- c) 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 students/staff such that there is a new competing right;
- d) the Authority in its discretion determines that the accommodation is not effective for the student's demonstrated disability-related learning needs or acts of daily living.

Food Areas

39. Under Ontario Regulation 562, of Ontario's Health Promotion and Protection Act, only Certified Service Animals are allowed to be in areas where food is served, sold, and offered for sale. Other Service Animals are not permitted in school cafeterias. No animals, including Certified Service Animal, are allowed in areas where food is prepared, processed, or handled such as the kitchen of the school cafeteria or the hospitality classroom.

Communication

40. The posting of this policy on the Authority website will serve as the method of communicating to the community that this accommodation is available.

41. Letters will be distributed as follows to inform:

- The school community of the arrival of the Certified Service Animal, its purpose, and rules regarding conduct around the Certified Service Animal (Appendix A)
- The families of the students in any of the classes where the Certified Service Animal will be present to elicit information concerning allergies, anxiety, or religious considerations from the students' families. (Appendix B)
- The families of any students who will be sharing transportation where the Certified Service Animal will be present, where applicable (Appendix C)

42. All information regarding the Certified Service Animal will be recorded as part of the student's IEP and retained in the student's OSR.

Data

43. The school will keep records of:

- the total number of requests for students to be accompanied by a Certified Service Animal;
- whether the request pertains to an elementary or a secondary student
- whether the student is the Handler (or another person)
- the number of requests approved and denied
- if denied, the rationale for the denial and a description of other supports available
- species of animals requested and approved
- types of needs being supported (medical, physical, emotional)



APPENDIX A

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Certified Service Animal in our school assisting one of our students.

This Certified Service Animal is highly trained and is able to assist in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for this student. This child's right to have a Certified Service Animal is protected under Human Rights legislation.

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

The Certified Service Animal has already been a benefit to the student, and we look forward to a lot of growth and learning together. We respect the needs of all students in providing a safe and inclusive learning environment. Please let us know if you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of a Certified Service Animal in our school.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Sincerely

Principal
C.C. Chief Executive Officer of Education, OSR



APPENDIX B

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

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

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

This Certified Service Animal is a highly trained and is able to assist in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for this student. This child's right to have a Certified Service Animal is protected under Human Rights legislation.

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

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the Certified Service Animal in your child's class, please contact me at the school.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Sincerely

Principal

C.C. Chief Executive Officer of Education, Classroom Teacher(s); OSR



APPENDIX C

SAMPLE LETTER TO THOSE SHARING TRANSPORTATION

Dear Parent/Guardian:

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

This Certified Service Animal is a highly trained and is able to assist in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for this student. This child's right to have a Certified Service Animal is protected under Human Rights legislation.

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

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the Certified Service Animal on your child's mode of transportation, please contact me at the school.

Thank you for your understanding and support. Sincerely

Principal

C.C. Chief Executive Officer of Education; Classroom Teacher(s); OSR



APPENDIX D

SAMPLE LETTER TO EMPLOYEES

To All Staff

This letter is to advise that the school is in the process of planning for a Certified Service Animal to attend Bloorview School with a student in order to accommodate the student's needs pursuant to the Human Right Code.

The Certified Service Animal is trained to provide service in a manner that does not disrupt the learning environment for others and is identifiable by its vest or harness. A specific timetable will be created, which identifies where and when the Certified Service Animal will be at different periods of the school day, and will be shared with you.

We respect the needs of all staff and our community partners in providing a safe and inclusive workplace and environment.

If you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of the Certified Service Animal, please contact me at the school.

Thank you for your understanding and support.

Sincerely

Principal

C.C. Chief Executive Officer of Education; Classroom Teacher(s); OSR



APPENDIX E

SAMPLE LETTER OF APPROVAL

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am writing to communicate that your request that your child/you attend school with a Certified Service Animal to provide accommodation for disability-related learning needs/acts of daily living has been approved.

As we have discussed, your/your child's ability to perform the responsibilities of a Handler, and assessment of benchmarks established for evaluating the effectiveness of the Certified Service Animal in meeting your/your child's accommodation needs will take place on a regular basis.

You will be responsible for ensuring that the Certified Service Animal is groomed, has a vest or harness and crate [if necessary], as well as a water bowl. All costs associated will be your responsibility.

If concerns arise regarding the integration of the Certified Service into the school community and your/your child's class(es), a meeting will be scheduled to review how the issues might be resolved.

In the event that the Certified Service Animal engages in behaviour that is distracting, disruptive or aggressive, including making noise, failing to follow commands, growling or nipping, you/your child/the Handler will be required to remove the Certified Service Animal from the classroom immediately and you will be required to arrange for the Certified Service Animal to be removed from the school. In such a case, alternative options for accommodation will be reviewed.

Thank you for your understanding.

Sincerely

Principal

C.C. Chief Executive Officer of Education; Classroom Teacher(s); OSR



APPENDIX F

SAMPLE LETTER OF DENIAL

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to communicate that your request that your child/you attend school with a Certified Service Animal to provide accommodation for disability-related learning needs and acts of daily living has been denied.

As we have discussed, your child is not able to perform the responsibilities of a Handler (and/or the animal is not trained and may be disruptive or a distraction in the school environment), and reasonable alternative accommodations that respect your child's dignity, encourage independence and facilitate integration are available to support your child's learning needs and access to meaningful educational services.

This decision is not subject to appeal. However, if you wish to discuss the alternative accommodation measures available to support your child while at school, please contact me to arrange for a meeting.

Thank you for your understanding.

Sincerely

Principal
C.C. Chief Executive Officer of Education; Classroom Teacher(s); OSR



EQ #13 – Form 1

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____ Class: _____

Address:

Home/Cell Phone Number:

DISABILITY-RELATED NEEDS TO BE ACCOMMODATED BY SERVICE ANIMAL

Please attach a copy of the assessment report from a registered pediatrician, psychologist, psychiatrist, optometrist, or audiologist containing:

- The student's diagnosis.
- A detailed description of the disability-related learning needs or acts of daily living to be accommodated.
- Details as to how the Service Animal will provide accommodation in a school setting.

VETERINARY CERTIFICATE

Please attach a certificate from a veterinarian who is qualified to practice veterinary medicine in the Province of Ontario (confirmation to be updated annually) attesting:

- The species (breed) of animal, age, and confirmation that the animal is an adult.
- That the animal does not have a disease or illness that might pose a risk to humans or dogs.
- That the animal has received all required vaccinations.
- That the animal is in good health to assist the student.

CERTIFICATE OF TRAINING

Please attach:

1. A copy of the certificate, not more than six months old, confirming the animal's training by an accredited training organization.

2. A letter confirming that the trainer will attend a School Council meeting to provide a presentation and respond to questions from the school community.
3. A copy of the certificate, not more than six months old, confirming the Student Handler's training by an accredited training organization.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE ANIMAL

1. Describe in detail the tasks or services performed by the Certified Service Animal.
2. Identify the oral commands or visual signs to which the Certified Service Animal responds.
3. Attestation will be required confirming that the Certified Service Animal does not make vocal noises, does not engage in distracting behaviour, and does not exhibit aggression.
Initials: _____
4. Identify whether the Certified Service Animal will be on a leash/harness or in a crate (please check one).
☐ Leash/harness ☐ Crate
5. Describe the biological needs of the Certified Service Animal.

STUDENT

- Can the student independently manage the Certified Service Animal? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Describe in detail where, when, and how the student currently utilizes the Certified Service Animal's services in public spaces for accommodation purposes.
- Please describe below what, if any, responsibilities the student is capable of performing independently.
- Please describe below the responsibilities you wish to have assumed by a school staff member.

STUDENT IS NOT THE HANDLER

Where the student is not the Handler, please describe below what, if any, responsibilities the student is capable of performing independently and the responsibilities you wish to have assumed by a school staff member.

INSURANCE

Pursuant to **Dog Owners' Liability Act**, RSO 1990, c.D16, the owner of a dog is responsible for any injury or death caused by the dog. Where the dog is owned by a registered charity, please provide a letter from the registered charity confirming their ownership of the dog.

A parent/legal guardian must provide an insurance certificate identifying the Authority as insured in the event that the animal causes damage to the school or its contents, or causes injury or death to any person accessing the school building or the school grounds. A minimum of two million dollars of coverage will be required.

Signature of Student (if Student Age 18 and Over)

Date

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian (if Student Under Age 18)

Date

Disclaimer

Information on this form is collected pursuant to the Authority's responsibilities set out in the Education Act and protected in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Information on this form will be used to provide education services pursuant to the Education Act s.170(1)7 and PPM 163 and the Human Rights Code, s.1. Questions regarding the collection of this information should be directed to the school principal.

To be Completed by: Parent/Guardian (OR Student Age 18 and over). Submit to School Principal.
Description of Use: Copy: OSR (Retention: E +5 Years)



SERVICE ANIMAL – PRINCIPAL'S CHECK LIST

Student Name: _____ Grade: ____ Class _____

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR A CERTIFIED SERVICE ANIMAL

- ☐ Assessment report with diagnosis and accommodation to be provided
- ☐ Supporting documents (IEP, psychological, occupational therapy, physical therapy, functional behaviour, and/or orientation and mobility assessments)
- ☐ Copy of municipal license (within 12 months)
- ☐ Veterinary certificate (within three months)
- ☐ Certificate of training (within six months)
- ☐ Certificate of training of Student Handler (within six months)
- ☐ Letter of confirmation that the trainer will present to School Council
- ☐ Certificate of insurance (within three months) and/or Letter from the registered charity which owns the animal.
- ☐ Letter of inquiry with school staff and community using the school pursuant to permit regarding allergies, phobia/fear, or cultural sensitivity

IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ Accommodation plan where there are competing rights (may include restriction of access to areas of school, change in classroom etc.)
- ☐ Timetable identifying bio breaks, when accompanying student, when in crate
- ☐ Emergency procedures (fire exit plan, lockdown plan, evacuation plan)
- ☐ Notification to parents that Certified Service Animal will be accompanying student
- ☐ Information session to school council meeting
- ☐ Posting on school website or Facebook that Certified Service Animal will be accompanying student
- ☐ Signage for front door, gymnasium door, and library door advising of service animal
- ☐ Transportation plan (if required)
- ☐ Orientation for school staff and students
- ☐ Training for staff member acting as Handler (if required)
- ☐ Identification of benchmarks for assessment of effectiveness (to be reviewed with IEP)