Appendix B
To the Report

Operational Procedures

Service Animals

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TCDSB Special Services Department

1.0 Purpose

Service animals are trained to provide assistance to children and adults with disabilities. Service animals allow an individual to attain independence in his/her daily tasks and assist with safety, mental well-being, and learning.

This policy provides directions for schools to follow when a parent requests the entry of a service animal for a student in a Toronto Catholic District School Board. Decisions regarding the entry of service animals shall be made on a case-by case-basis. The request will be reviewed by the Principal in consultation with the Superintendents of Schools and Special Services. The entry of service animals into schools will be determined following consultation and through a school based team meeting.

2.0 Background

Section 10(2) of the Ontario Human Rights Code, RSO 1990, c H.19 (the "Code") and section 2 of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, SO 2005 c 11 (the "AODA") provide a broad definition of the term "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 on 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;

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Schools are required to accommodate people with disabilities and their disability related needs to ensure equal access. However, where the accommodation needed by the person would cause the school undue hardship, the school is not required to offer accommodation.

The AODA (Accessibility For Ontarians For Disabilities Act, 2005) requires that a school allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by a guide dog or service animal, and requires a school to permit people with guide dogs or service animals to enter its premises (the school, buses etc.) with the animal and to keep the animal with the person, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law.

As defined by the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians for Disabilities Act), an animal is a service animal for a person with a disability if:

(a) the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the person for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or

(b) the person provides documentation from one of the following regulated health professionals confirming that the person requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability:

(i) A member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.

(ii) A member of the College of Psychologists of Ontario.

3.0 Accreditation of Service Animals

Service animals must be certified and registered in Canada. For the accreditation of Service Dogs, the most common form of service animal, the Special Skills Dog (SSD) or National Service Dog (NSD) are two organizations with such oversight. Dogs accredited by those associations will have a distinctive harness and leash and/or saddlebag and vest.

Training schools for any type of service, guide or working dog in Ontario must be members and accredited by either:

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a) The International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF): Members' purpose is to serve the visually impaired and blind people from around the world by training and providing Guide Dogs;

b) Assistance Dogs International, Inc. (ADI): ADI is a coalition of not-for-profit organizations that train and place Assistance Dogs.

4.0 Procedure for a Request Regarding the Entry of a Service Animal in a School

A Parent/Guardian must notify the school in writing that they are requesting a service animal to accompany the child during the school day. The Principal will then provide the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) with the **Request for Service Animal Involvement with a Student** form (**Appendix A**).

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must complete, along with the form above, the following items and return the entire package to the Principal before the implementation process can begin. The following must be included in the package:

- A letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the College of Psychologists confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need as well as a recommendation for the use of a certified service animal;
- A letter from an accredited registered Service Animal Training Centre stating that a certified service animal has been placed with the student and the date of formal certification;
- Provide the school with proof of up-to-date vaccinations;
- A municipal Service Animal license;
- Confirmation that the is animal in good health (a letter from the Veterinarian);
- Provide proof of liability insurance.

The Principal will inform and consult with the Superintendent of Schools and Superintendent of Special Services prior to planning the implementation process.

The Principal will schedule a School Based Support Learning Team Meeting with the Parent(s)/Guardian(s), a representative of the animal training centre, and appropriate school staff who work with the student. The Superintendent may be invited to this meeting.

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Discussions may include:

- Safety considerations (e.g., severe allergies, staff or students with asthma, fear of animals, etc.);
- The potential impact of the involvement of the service animal on the school community;
- Animal care requirements, handling routines and responsibilities including who will act as the Handler at school;
- Guidelines for staff and students;
- The role of and communication with the Parent(s)/Guardian(s).

5.0 Responsibilities of the Principal:

The Principal will ensure that all stakeholders are apprised of the reasons for the use of a service animal, the benefits to the student in the school environment, and that the description of activity are consistent with the needs of the student. If the student has an IEP, the need and role of the service animal should be included in the IEP.

1. Complete Principal Checklist for the Entry of a Service Animal into the School (See **Appendix B**).

2. Place a copy of the parent letter and the medical diagnosis in the OSR. Any further documentation relating to the use of the Service Animal is to be housed in the OSR.

3. Consult with the Superintendent of Education and Superintendent of Special Services upon receipt of a parental request for the use of a Service Animal in the school.

4. Set up an SBSLT involving the Parent(s)/Guardian(s), Principal, classroom Teacher(s), Special Education staff, a representative from the relevant and accredited Service Animal facility of Canada, the student (when age-appropriate) along with the Superintendent of Education and Superintendent of Special Services to discuss and develop a plan to determine the following:

    a. Purpose/function of the service animal, both through discussion, as well as through an observation of the student with the Service Animal.

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b. Review of the student's strengths and needs and the IEP to determine if the support of a Service Animal can provide accommodations for learning, independence and/or safety not yet provided by the school.

c. Personal care of the animal, including:

i. Who will be the person (handler) responsible for the animal?

ii. What is the backup procedure if the person (handler) is not available?

iii. Where is the safest and most environmentally sound place for the animal to relieve itself?

iv. If the student is able to maintain the personal care of the service animal, who will accompany the student outside, if needed?

v. Is there a suitable disposal container that the handler can reach?

vi. How will the handler "clean up" after the animal?

vii. What considerations have been made for winter conditions and inclement weather?

viii. What considerations have been made for where the animal's water bowl is to be kept?

ix. Who will fill the water bowl?

6. Ensure classroom teacher(s) and support staff are informed.

7. Consider any necessary change in routine and procedures, as well as any programming changes that may be required.

8. Examine the seating arrangements and traffic flow patterns in the classroom(s).

9. Forward the following letters:

a. A letter to inform the school community regarding arrival of the animal, its purpose and the rules and regulations regarding the

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existence of the Service Animal. Sample Letter to Parents In The Community Regarding The Entry Of A Service Animal Into The School (**Appendix C**)

b. A specific letter to the students in any of the classes where the animal will be present in case of allergies, extreme phobias from the students' Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Caregiver(s). Sample Letter To The Parents of the Students In Class(es) with a Service Animal (**Appendix D**)

Note: In cases where the accommodation of a Service Animal is required and there are medical or sensitivity issues in the class or school, alternate provisions might have to be investigated. Where necessary in the decision making process, the rights and needs of one person might have to be balanced against the rights and needs of others. For example, in the case of severe allergies, some of the options to consider may be creating distance between two individuals, eliminating contact, etc.

c. A letter to the students who will be sharing transportation where the Service Animal will be present including students from another school or school board. Sample Letter to Parents of Students Sharing Transportation with Service Animal (**Appendix E**).

Note: All letters regarding the Service Animal must be retained in the student's OSR for a period of one year, or until superseded.

10. Inform all school staff and health and safety representatives of the presence of the Service Animal.

11. Inform all school volunteers of the presence of the Service Animal.

12. Inform the Catholic School Parent Council (CSPC) of the presence of the Service Animal.

13. Create a Management Plan for the Care of the Service Animal (**Appendix F**) for the student and Service Animal, including:

    a. Making arrangements for the animal to visit the school after or before students are present in order to become familiar with the school environment;

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b. A timetable for the introduction of the Service Animal to the school and to the class;

c. Rules of conduct around the Service Animal for students, staff, and the school community, as well as how the information will be disseminated;

d. An assembly for the student body, staff, and the community involving representatives from the Service Animal Association to provide education and awareness of the Service Animal in school.

14. Place a sign (generally provided by Service Animal Associations) on the doors of the school alerting visitors to the animal's presence.

15. Revise Student School Emergency Evacuation Response Plan and to include the Service Animal **(Appendix G)**.

16. Inform the Transportation Services and make transportation arrangements, as needed.

17. Complete the Procedures for the Transportation of Service Animals on Bus Routes. (Refer to **Appendix H**).

18. If the bus carrier is transporting students from other Boards on the same bus while the animal is present, then the other Board must be notified so that they can in turn notify the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of that child/those children riding on that bus.

6.0 Responsibilities of Students with Service Animals and their Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

The successful entry of a Service Animal into the school environment is dependent upon the joint co-operation of the school staff with the parent and student.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must adhere to the following:

- Be responsible for any financial implications regarding the use and care of the Service Animal, including the provision of a fully trained/certified animal handler to provide for bio-breaks, in cases where the student is unable to meet the needs of the animal;

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- Annually, must provide the school/board with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, licenses and confirmation that that the animal is in good health;

- Inform school administration and teachers of the Service Animal's visiting schedule or approximate schedule;

- Provide a mat (not a cushion) or soft crate for service animals. This will act as a marker of where the animal is required to stay;

- Keep the animal clean and well groomed;

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) should report immediately any incidents involving their Service Animal to the Principal or Vice Principal;

- Address immediately any medical issues of the Service Animal;

- If requested Parent(s)/Guardian(s) or the student must provide proof that the Service Animal is permitted in the city or town where the school is located or in the municipality they are visiting on a school trip, or in any other jurisdiction whose laws might pertain to their entry there;

- The Toronto Catholic District School Board recommends that Parent(s)/Guardian(s) or (where applicable) students review their insurance coverage (home and content insurance as it relates to liability coverage), and provide proof to the Board of adequate liability coverage.

7.0 Responsibilities of the Handler

The student or Handler of the Service Animal plays a pivotal role in the care and suitability of the Service Animal for its intended environment.

The term "Handler" refers to the individual who has received training and guides, instructs and looks after the animal. In the situation where the student is unable to look after the animal's needs due to physical and/or cognitive challenges, a second individual is required and that person is deemed to be the Handler.

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The student or Handler of the Service Animal must adhere to the following:

- ✓ Demonstrate that the animal is suitable for educational settings (e.g. it will not interfere with school routines and activities) and will not pose a risk to health and safety;
- ✓ Keep the animal in control at all times;
- ✓ Ensure the animal does not vocalize unnecessarily, e.g. barking, growling or whining;
- ✓ Keep the Service Animal on a leash or contained as appropriate at all times;
- ✓ Responsibility for bio breaks, cleaning up after the animal, for its feeding and other care;
- ✓ Make certain the animal's behaviour is not aggressive or threatening;
- ✓ Maintain full responsibility of the Service Animal at all times and do not leave the animal unattended;
- ✓ Respect the rights and feelings of others;
- ✓ If the student/handler notice any aggressive behaviour involving their Service Animal such as, growling or biting they must remove the Service Animal from the situation immediately;
- ✓ Students or their Parent(s)/Guardian(s) should report any incidents involving their Service Animal to the Principal or Vice principal immediately.

Note: Guide Dogs: Guide Dog handlers (i.e. users) are responsible for caring for their dogs, and the dogs are with them at all times for navigational purposes. Most Guide Dog schools have a minimum age requirement 16 or 18 years old.

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8.0 Exclusion of Service Animals

1. A Service Animal can only be excluded from access to the premises where this is required by another law. Examples include the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Food Safety and Quality Act. The former Act prohibits service animals 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).

2. Where there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of a service animal, consideration must be given to options available prior to exclusion of a Service Animal. An example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the Service Animal. 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.).

3. A service animal can be excluded if it is of a breed that is prohibited by law.

9.0 Cross References:

Bill 48: the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, 2019
PPM 163: School Board Policies on Service Animals, 2019
OHRC Policy on Accessible Education for Students with Disabilities, 2018
Special Education in Ontario K-12 Policy and Resource Guide, 2017
Learning for All, 2013
PPM 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools, 2013
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005
Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001
Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990
Blind Persons Rights Act 1990
Health Protection and Promotion Act, 1990
Education Amendment Act (Bill 82), 1980

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10.0 Attachments:

Appendix A: Request for Service Animal Involvement with a Student

Appendix B: Principal Checklist for the Entry of a Service Animal Into a School

Appendix C: Sample Letter to Parents in the Community Regarding the Entry of a Service Animal into a School

Appendix D: Sample Letter to Parents of Students in Classes with a Service Animal

Appendix E: Sample Letter to Parents of Students Sharing Transportation with a Service Animal

Appendix F: Management Plan for the Care of A Service Animal

Appendix G: Student School Emergency Evacuation Response Plan

Appendix H: Transportation of Service Animals

Appendix I: Decision-Making Process for Entry of Service Animals in Schools and Other TCDSB Premises

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