POLICY SECTION:

SUB-SECTION:

POLICY NAME: Service Animals

POLICY NO:

Date Approved:	**Date of Next Review:**	**Dates of Amendments:**

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 Blind Person's Rights Act (BPRA) 1990
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

Appendix: TCDSB Operational Procedures – Service Animals

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Purpose:

This policy on service animals has been developed in accordance with Policy and Procedures Memorandum (PPM) 163: School Board Policies on Service Animals, 2019, and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA, 2005). It is intended to maximize the integration and full participation of all stakeholders in the TCDSB. This policy allows students to be accompanied by a service animal in school when doing so would be an appropriate accommodation to support one's learning needs, and would meet the school board's duty to accommodate students with disabilities under the Ontario Human Rights Code. It further establishes

consistent and transparent processes that allow for meaningful consideration of requests for service animals to accompany students in school.

Scope and Responsibility:

This policy applies to all TCDSB elementary and secondary schools, facilities, and programs including extended-day programs operated by the TCDSB. However, it does not apply to licensed child-care providers operating on TCDSB premises.

Alignment with MYSP:

Living Our Catholic Values
Enhancing Public Confidence
Fostering Student Achievement and Well-Being
Achieving Excellence in Governance

Policy:

This policy provides direction for schools when a parent requests on behalf of a student, or a staff member does so on his/her own behalf, the entry and use of a service animal on Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) premises. Decisions regarding the entry and use of service animals shall be made on a case-by-case basis following consultation with all appropriate stakeholders. All requests pertaining to the use of service animals on TCDSB premises shall be reviewed by the Principal in consultation with the Parent(s)/Guardian(s), School Based Support Learning Team (SBSLT), Field Superintendent, and Superintendent of Special Services.

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Regulations:

1. **Accreditation and Training of Service Animals:**
   Service animals must be certified and registered in Canada. The accreditation of Service Dogs, the most common form of service animal, must be provided by one of two nationally certified accreditation agencies (See **Definitions**).

   Training schools for any type of service, guide or working dog in Ontario must be members and accredited by one of two internationally recognized agencies (See **Definitions**).

2. **Procedure for a Request Regarding the Entry of a Service Animal in a School:**
   Upon initial written request by a parent/guardian for a service animal to accompany the child during the school day, the parent will be directed to complete the *Request for Service Animal Involvement with a Student* form along with the items outlined in Article 2 in the **Appendix**: Operating Procedures – Service Animals.

3. **Communication Plan:**
   School Board staff will communicate with Teachers, Support Staff, Parent(s)/Guardian(s), and students in schools/classes where there is a service animal. Furthermore, there will be regular communication with other community stakeholders such as professional associations, the Toronto Student Transportation Group, and parent/community organizations such as the Catholic School Parent Council (CSPC) and Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) regarding this policy's regulations and updates.

4. **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. If the student has an IEP, the need and role of the service animal should be included in the IEP.

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5. 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.

6. 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. If the student him/herself is unable to manage the animal, a staff member or third-party handler will be required to provide assistance. The school must determine which of the two above types of support is the most appropriate for its circumstances, taking into consideration Board vulnerable sector screening and privacy regulations.

7. Exclusion of Service Animals

A service animal can only be excluded from access to the premises where this is required by another law.

Where there is a risk to the health and/or 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.

Definitions:

1. Accreditation and Training Organizations: The Special Skills Dog (SSD) or National Service Dog (NSD) are two nationally recognized organizations with oversight for the accreditation of service dogs. 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 one of two internationally recognized agencies.

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;

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

2. Disability:

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA, 2005) provides 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;

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 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

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law. Whether a service animal is otherwise excluded from the premises by law will be determined using Board procedures outlined in this policy.

3. Handler: The term 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.

4. Parents: The term "Parents" refers to Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s).

5. Service Animal: Refers to any animal that provides support to a person with a disability. Traditionally, service animals have been dogs, and dogs remain the most common species of service animal; however, other species may also provide services to individuals with disabilities. The types of functions performed by service animals are diverse, and may or may not include sensory, medical, therapeutic, and emotional support services. Service animals allow individuals to achieve independence in daily tasks and promote safety, mental well-being, and learning.

As defined by the AODA, 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 a regulated health professional, such as one of the following, 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.

A service animal is engaged to provide support relating to a student with a medically documented disability to assist that student in meaningfully accessing education. Due consideration should be given to any documentation on how the service animal assists with the student's learning needs, and disability-related needs (e.g., documentation from the student's medical professionals).

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TCDSB staff will make a determination, on a case-by-case basis, as to whether a service animal may accompany a student taking into account all the circumstances, including the needs of the student and the school community and a school board's obligation to provide meaningful access to education.

6. Guide Dog: The Ontario Blind Persons' Rights Act (BPRA) 1990 states that no person shall be denied accommodations, services, or facilities available in any place to which the public is customarily admitted, for the reason that the person is blind and accompanied by a guide dog.

Evaluation and Metrics:

The effectiveness of the policy will be determined by measuring the following:
1. Data collection on a regular basis including, but not limited to:
    - total number of requests for students to be accompanied by service animals;
    - whether requests are for elementary or secondary school students;
    - the number of requests approved and denied;
    - if denied, the rationale for the decision, including a description of other supports and/or services provided to the student to support their access to education;
    - species of service animals requested and approved;
    - types of needs being supported (e.g., medical, physical, emotional).

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