

## **SERVICE DOGS IN SCHOOLS**

### **Background**

The Division recognizes the diverse needs and unique accommodations students may require to enhance their learning. These accommodations, linked to the student's Individualized Program Plan (IPP), may include the use of a Service Dog. Service Dogs are working animals allowed full public access in Alberta and are trained to meet the specific needs of students with whom they have been partnered.

### **Procedures**

1. The Parent/Guardian shall:
  - 1.1 Provide a letter to the school indicating the student has been approved for a Service Dog and an indication of the supports that will be provided.
  - 1.2 Provide a letter from a physician or psychologist confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need including a recommendation for a service dog.
  - 1.3 Ensure the Service Dog meets qualifications under the [Alberta Service Dogs Qualifications Regulations](#).
  - 1.4 Provide a copy of the [Service Dog Identification Card](#) to be placed in the cumulative file.
  - 1.5 Provide evidence of adequate insurance of \$2,000,000.00 for general liability.
  - 1.6 Work collaboratively with the Principal, school staff and Division to ensure successful integration and ongoing support for the student and Service Dog.
  - 1.7 Assume all financial obligations regarding the use and care and training of the Service Dog including special accommodations to the building.
  - 1.8 Provide the school with yearly documentation regarding vaccinations and health of the Service Dog.
  
2. The Principal shall:
  - 2.1 Review the AP for Service Dogs in Schools with Parents/Guardians who have made the request.
  - 2.2 Inform the Superintendent or designate of the written request for a Service Dog prior to arranging a meeting with parents.
  - 2.3 Review the student's Individualized Program Plan with consultants and school staff to ensure that a Service Dog is consistent with the needs outlined in the IPP.
  - 2.4 Meet with Parents/Guardians to discuss the requirements and the potential transition of the Service Dog, including entry dates into the school setting to ensure a safe and caring school environment for all students.
  - 2.5 Inform and educate appropriate stakeholders that a Service Dog will be working in the school to elicit information regarding possible issues such as allergies, phobias or anxiety.

- 2.6 Explore concerns including interference with the delivery of educational programs, classroom routines, hallways transitions and liaise with stakeholders to resolve specific issues that may arise.
3. The Principal, the Parent/Guardian(s), the Teacher and school based team will work collaboratively to create a transition plan to integrate the Service Dog into the school community. The transition plan will include:
  - 3.1 Establish an appropriate space and plan for the removal and disposal of waste.
  - 3.2 Establish guidelines for staff, students and general public regarding the Service Dog.
  - 3.3 Identify necessary changes to routines, procedures or programming needs including preparation of the school environment to ensure the safety of all students.
  - 3.4 In the case of conflicting students' needs the principal will first attempt to consider alternatives to schedules and routes etc. If no such accommodation exists, the conflicting needs will be assessed and a decision will be made which imposes the least hardship on the school and affected individuals.
  - 3.5 Notify the transportation department as required.
  - 3.6 Arrange for visible signage outside of the school to alert visitors of the Service Dog.
  - 3.7 Revise emergency procedures as necessary. Inform the fire department of the presence of a Service Dog.

Reference:

[Alberta Service Dog Qualification Regulation](#)  
[Service Dogs Act \(2017\)](#)  
[Section 45, School Act](#)