



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE STUDENTS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY	
Effective:	June 8, 2023
Last Revised:	March 21, 2025

PUBLIC USE OF GUIDE DOGS AND SERVICE ANIMALS

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To ensure that all reasonable efforts shall be made to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility for all members of the Rainbow District School Board community.

1.2 This procedure applies when working and interacting with individuals with disabilities including parents, guardians and other persons who are invited to attend schools within the Rainbow District School Board.

1.3 The application of this policy does not limit or substitute any requirements under the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA), the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#), or any other applicable legislation on its obligations to people with disabilities.

1.4 Pursuant to the Education Act and regulations, a school building is not a place to which the public is customarily admitted. Pursuant to the Education Act and Ontario Regulation 474/00 Access To School Premises, Rainbow District School Board requires each school/board facility to have a process for visitors.

1.5 Any determination of whether a guide dog, service dog or service animal is an appropriate accommodation while the parent, guardian or member of the public is visiting one of our schools/board facilities is a decision of the Board. A regulated health professional cannot unilaterally prescribe that a guide dog, service dog or service animal be a specific accommodation while the parent, guardian or visiting member of the public is attending a school.

1.6 When a parent, guardian or visitor seeks to attend a school/school related event/board facility with a guide dog, service dog or service animal, the guide dog, service dog or service animal and the handler must be certified as having been successfully trained by an accredited training facility and must not be self-trained.

1.7 Only in exceptional circumstances, subject to the standards of undue hardship pursuant to the Human Rights Code, will the Board consider service animals, other than dogs, as an accommodation for a parent, guardian or visitor and only if other reasonable methods of accommodation in the school/board facility setting have been unsuccessful in meeting the demonstrated disability-related needs of the parent, guardian or visitor.

1.8 A service animal can be excluded if it is of a breed that is prohibited by law. An example would be the [Dog Owners' Liability Act](#) which places restrictions on pit bull terriers.

2. APPLICATION

2.1 Service animals have traditionally been highly trained dogs that assist individuals with various tasks of daily living (guide dogs, hearing and signal dogs, mobility assistance dogs, seizure response dogs).

2.2 In most circumstances, a guide dog will be a highly trained dog provided to support the orientation and mobility needs of a parent, guardian or visitor handler who has a diagnosis of blindness/low vision, and the guide dog will provide the handler with greater independence, dignity and opportunity for integration.

2.3 The term service animal is used in the Accessibility Standards for Customer Service under the AODA to describe an animal that assists an individual with a disability in accessing goods and services available to the public. A school/board facility is not a public space and is not generally accessible to the public. Therefore, the AODA does not apply to a parent, guardian or visitor's use of a service dog/service animal when accessing services in school buildings/board facilities.

(a) Pursuant to the Ontario Human Rights Code, it is possible that a service animal might include different species that provide a therapeutic function (horses), emotional support, sensory function, companionship and/or comfort.

(b) The determination of whether the animal is an appropriate accommodation in the school/board facility setting for a demonstrated disability-related need is a decision of the Board.

(i) Such a decision will consider that animals, other than dogs, are not trained by an accredited training organization and may pose a risk to the safety of students and staff/individuals and/or may be disruptive to the learning or other environment.

2.4 Due to the risks to safety, and risks of disruption and distraction in the learning environment, the Board does not permit training of potential guide dogs and service animals in the school/board facility setting or during school activities.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 For the purpose of this procedure the following definitions apply:

Accredited training organization is a guide dog or service dog trainer that is accredited by:

- 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; or
- 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
- 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).

Disability means

(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 coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impairment, 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](#).

Guide dog means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations pursuant to the Blind Persons' Rights Act.

Handler refers to the individual trained by an Accredited Training Organization who is managing the guide dog/service dog and in most cases will be the parent, guardian or visitor for whom the guide dog/service dog is provided.

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

Service animal for the purpose of this procedure includes a therapy dog, companion animal, comfort animal and emotional support animal and includes a dog or other domesticated animal that may legally reside in an urban, residential home, that is not highly trained to perform particular tasks to assist with a person's disability-related needs, but provides emotional support (and/or companionship, calming influence) for a person with a disability-related mental health and/or psychological need and/or comfort during a difficult period.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principals

4.1 School principals/board personnel are responsible for the management of the school/board facility, the staff providing educational programs and the safety of all students.

(a) A school principal/board personnel has authority to exclude any animal, including guide dogs/service dogs and service animals, from entry onto school premises and school building(s)/board facilities, as an accommodation for a parent, guardian or visitor, provided that the parent, guardian or visitor is offered appropriate alternative accommodation to meet their demonstrated disability-related needs.

(b) School principals/board personnel, before admitting a guide dog/service dog or service animal into the school/board facility with the parent, guardian or visitor handler, shall require them to submit a completed application, included in **Appendix A** of the procedure.

(c) Before admitting a service animal, the school principal/board personnel shall review **Appendix B** of the procedure to ensure that the application requirements have been met and implemented.

4.2 On receipt of an application for a guide dog/service dog or service animal, the school principal/board personnel shall review the application for completeness and may request any additional information or clarification necessary to assess the request for accommodation.

4.3 The school principal/board personnel shall be responsible for communication with the parent, guardian or visitor with respect to the accommodation process, and, where approved, the implementation and management of the accommodation.

Parents, Guardians and Visitors

4.4 Parents, guardians and visitors are required to provide all necessary documentation and engage in the consultation process for the purpose of considering and implementing, if appropriate, the request that a guide dog/service dog or service animal accompany them to school/board facility related activities. The parents, guardians and visitors shall be responsible for:

- (a) submission of Appendix A;
- (b) providing confirmation of municipal license for the dog (to be updated annually);
- (c) providing confirmation of certificates of training not older than six (6) months from an Accredited Training Organization attesting that the dog and the parent, guardian or visitor handler have successfully completed training and may safely engage in a public setting without creating a risk of safety or a risk of disruption within a school/board facility setting;
- (d) diagnosis from a registered doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist (or other regulated health professional as determined by the Board) with a recommendation for the use of a guide dog / service dog;
- (e) a description of the services provided by the guide dog/service dog to the parent, guardian or visitor, and how those services will accommodate the parent, student or visitor/s disability-related needs and assist the parent, guardian or visitor in participating in school activities;
- (f) 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; and confirming that the dog 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 parent, guardian or visitor;

(g) general liability insurance providing coverage in an amount specified by the Board¹ in the event of an injury or death as a result of the guide dog/service dog's attendance on school/board property or a school/board facility related activity. The general liability insurance must be updated annually².

4.5 Parents, guardians and visitors will be expected to act as the guide dog/service dog's primary handler. The handler must:

(a) demonstrate the ability to control the guide dog/service dog in accordance with the training received;

(b) ensure that the guide dog/service dog is always wearing a vest and leash or harness when the dog is not in its crate;

(c) ensure the guide dog/service dog does not disrupt the learning or experience of others with unnecessary movement, vocalization or other behaviour, including aggressive or threatening behaviour;

(d) ensure that the guide dog/service dog's biological needs are addressed;

(e) transition and maintain at all times the guide dog/service dog on a leash, harness, mat and/or crate;

(f) comply with an accommodation plan that addresses the competing rights of others.

Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal

4.6 The guide dog/service dog/service animal:

(a) shall be highly trained and certified by an Accredited Training Organization;

(i) will have evidence of training or re-certification confirming compliance with training requirements within the last six (6) months;

¹ Note: Usually \$2 million in general liability insurance coverage is required. This may be waived on the basis of equity in the event that it causes financial hardship to the family.

² Note: Insurance should not pose a barrier to the provision of accommodation as a result of socio-economic factors.

- (b) must be groomed and clean;
- (c) must at all times while on school/board 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 or other environment;
 - (i) such behaviour includes, but is not limited to, growling, nipping, barking, biting, attention seeking, eating;
 - (ii) any such behaviour is grounds to prohibit the guide dog/service dog's attendance on school/board 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/board facility environment to remain eligible for entry to school buildings/board facilities or school-related events.

5. ASSESSMENT OF THE ACCOMMODATION REQUEST

5.1 Once the application and all necessary documentation is received by the school principal/board personnel, a review will take place by the Board team and a meeting shall be scheduled to review the accommodation request. Every effort will be made to review the documentation and schedule a meeting in a reasonable timeframe.

5.2 A meeting with the Board team, the parent, guardian or visitor, the health practitioner recommending the guide dog/service dog or service animal, the trainer of the guide dog/service dog and of the handler, and any other individuals who may contribute to the accommodation process may be scheduled to review the request for accommodation.

5.3 Each request for a guide dog/service dog or service animal will be addressed on an individual basis giving consideration to:

- (a) evidence of how the guide dog/service dog or service animal's attendance at school/board facility might provide accommodation for a demonstrated disability-related need and/or act of daily living necessary while at school/board facility;

(b) assessment information provided by a regulated health professional with expertise regarding the parent, guardian or visitor's disability-related needs supporting the request for a guide dog/service dog or service animal;

(c) the training and certification of the guide dog/service dog and handler;

(d) the impact of the accommodation on the parent, guardian or visitor's dignity, integration and independence;

(e) whether one or more alternative accommodations can meet the needs of the parent, guardian or visitor;

(f) whether training will be required for staff;

(g) the impact of the accommodation on the learning or other environment for students/staff/individuals, 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.

5.4 The process of accommodation, including inquiries regarding competing rights and notice to the school community, shall respect the parent, guardian or visitor's right to privacy regarding their disability and specific learning needs and/or needs of daily living.

5.5 Service animals shall only be considered when reasonable methods of accommodation in the school/board facility setting have been unsuccessful in meeting the demonstrated disability related needs of the parent, guardian or visitor. Parents, guardians or visitors must complete an application for a service animal included in **Appendix A** of the procedure.

(a) The accommodation process following a request by a parent, guardian or visitor for a service animal shall be consistent with the process noted above, but shall also include any special considerations that may arise if an animal is a species other than a dog, including the ability to be trained, necessary biological functions, the capacity for the animal to respond to commands, whether the animal may be kept on a leash/harness/crate/mat and how such restrictions might impact accommodation.

5.6 The determination with respect to the application for a guide dog/service dog/service animal shall be communicated to the parent, guardian or visitor in writing in accordance with **Appendix D or E**.

6. IMPLEMENTING THE ACCOMMODATION

6.1 Where approval is granted, the school principal/board personnel will:

(a) organize an orientation session for school staff, students and the parent, guardian or visitor;

(b) identify a location/process to be used for a bio-break, and/or water break;

(i) access may be limited to certain activities, areas of the school/board facility, or certain times of the day, including but not limited to, where exclusion is required pursuant to the Health Protection and Promotion Act or the Food Safety and Quality Act 2001, which prohibit service animals from being in places where food is prepared, processed or handled.

(ii) assessment may be required by the Board's Health and Safety Officer regarding health and safety issues applicable to different areas/activities in the school/board facility;

(c) share information, including a notice to the community via a letter to parents/guardians; posting on the school's website/social media.

7. CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT

7.1 A review of the effectiveness of the guide dog/service dog or service animal in supporting the parent, guardian or visitor's attendance at school/board facilities shall be undertaken annually prior to the commencement of the school year or as required.

7.2 Approval may be revoked at any time by the principal/board personnel if:

(a) there are any concerns for the health and safety of students, staff, community or the guide dog / service dog / 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 guide dog/service dog/service animal from the school/board facility immediately. Alternative options for accommodation will be discussed;

(c) there has been a change to the parent, guardian or visitor'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) in the event of a Violent Incident Report;

(e) the Board in its discretion determines that the accommodation is not effective for the parent, guardian or visitor's demonstrated disability-related learning needs or acts of daily living.

8. RECORDS

8.1 A copy of the application and confirmation of approval, as well as any other relevant documents supporting the accommodation, shall be retained by the principal/board personnel in the main office or other designated area.

8.2 The Board shall be required to collect, use and disclose the personal information of the parent, guardian or visitor in order to fulfill the accommodation process. Notice of the collection, use and disclosure will be provided to the parent, guardian or visitor. Sharing of the personal information will be limited to that which is necessary to implement the accommodation.

9. FOOD AREAS

Regulation 493/17 of Ontario's Health Promotion and Protection Act allows guide dogs and service dogs / service animals in areas where food is served, sold, and offered for sale. Steps should be taken to ensure that guide dogs and service animals in school cafeterias or areas where students are consuming food are not disruptive and do not eat student food. No animals are allowed in areas where food is prepared, processed, or handled such as the kitchen of the school cafeteria or the hospitality classroom.

10. SOURCES

Ontario 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
PPM 163 School Board Policies on Service Animals
J.F. v. Waterloo Catholic District School Board, 2017 HRT0 1121 (CanLII)
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, SO 2005, c.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
Ontario Public School Boards' Association

Public Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals

Appendix A

Application for Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal

This form is to be submitted to the school principal/board personnel.

School/Board Facility

Parent, Guardian or Visitor Name

Address

Home/Cell Telephone Number

**Disability-Related Needs to be Accommodated by Guide Dog / Service Dog
/Service Animal**

- ▶ Please attach a copy of the assessment report from a registered doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, optometrist or audiologist containing the diagnosis and describing in detail the disability-related learning needs or acts of daily living to be accommodated and how the guide dog/service dog/service animal will provide accommodation in a school/board facility setting.

Municipal License

- ▶ Please attach a copy of the municipal license, not more than 12 months old. Please note that confirmation of license will be required annually.

Veterinary Certificate

- ▶ Please attach a certificate from a veterinarian qualified to practice veterinary medicine in the Province of Ontario (confirmation to be updated annually) attesting to:
 - ▶ the breed of animal, age of animal and that the animal is an adult;
 - ▶ the animal does not have a disease or illness that might pose a risk to humans;
 - ▶ the animal has received all required vaccinations; and
 - ▶ the animal is in good health to assist the student/individual.

Certificate of Training

- ▶ Please attach a copy of the certificate, not more than 6 months old, confirming the guide dog/service dog/service animal's training by a training organization accredited by the International Guide Dog Federation or Assistance or Dogs

International or an attestation of compliance with the MSAR standard for training, as defined in the Student Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animal's Procedure.

► Please attach a copy of the certificate, not more than 6 months old, confirming the student handler's training by an accredited training organization by the International Guide Dog Federation or Assistance Dogs International or an attestation of compliance with the MSAR standard for training, as defined in the Student Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals' Procedure.

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. Please attach a certificate of home or contents insurance. Where the dog is owned by a registered charity, please provide a letter from the registered charity confirming their ownership of the dog.

Public Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals

Appendix B

Principal's/Board Personnel's Checklist for Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal

School/Board Facility

Parent, Guardian or Visitor Name

Application Requirements for Guide Dog/Service Dog /Service Animal

- ☐ Assessment report with diagnosis and accommodation to be provided
- ☐ Supporting documents (psychological, occupational therapy, physical therapy, functional behaviour, and/or orientation and mobility assessments)
- ☐ Copy of municipal license [within 12 months]
- ☐ Veterinary certificate [within 3 months]
- ☐ Certificate of training or attestation for guide dog / service dog / service animal [within 6 months]
- ☐ Certificate of insurance [within 3 months] or Letter from the registered charity which owns the dog
- ☐ Letter of inquiry with school staff/board personnel and community using the school/board facility pursuant to permit regarding allergies, phobia/fear or cultural sensitivity
- ☐ Assessment by Health and Safety Officer

Implementation Requirements

- ☐ Accommodation plan where there are competing rights (may include restriction of access to areas of school/board facility, change in classroom etc.)
- ☐ Emergency procedures (fire exit plan, lockdown plan, evacuation plan)
- ☐ Letter/notice to parents that guide dog/service dog/service animal will be in attendance at a school/board facility.
- ☐ Posting on school website or Facebook that guide dog/service dog/service animal will be in attendance at a school event/board facility.
- ☐ Signage for front door, gymnasium door and library door advising of guide dog/ service dog/service animal

Public Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals

Appendix C
Sample Letter to Employees

Date

To Employees:

This letter is to advise that the school/board facility is in the process of planning for a guide dog/service dog/service animal to attend [school] with a parent, guardian or visitor in order to accommodate their needs.

The guide dog/service dog/service animal is trained to provide service in a manner that does not disrupt school/board facility activities and/or events for others and is identifiable by its vest or harness.

We respect the needs of all staff in providing a safe and inclusive workplace and environment. Please let us know if you have any specific concerns regarding the presence of a guide dog/service dog/service animal in our school/board facility.

Thank you for your ongoing cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Principal

Public Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals

Appendix D

Sample Letter - Decision Letter Approving Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal

Date

Dear Parent, Guardian or Visitor

I am writing to communicate the decision regarding your request that you attend school/board facility with a guide dog/service dog/service animal to provide accommodation for disability-related learning needs/acts of daily living.

I wish to confirm approval of your request.

As we have discussed, your ability to perform the responsibilities of a handler, and assessment of benchmarks established for evaluating the effectiveness of the guide dog/service dog/service animal in meeting your accommodation needs will take place on a regular basis.

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

If concerns arise regarding the integration of the guide dog/service dog/service animal into the school community, a meeting will be scheduled to review how the concerns might be resolved.

In the event that the guide dog/service dog/service animal engages in behaviour that is distracting, disruptive or aggressive, including making noise, failing to follow commands, growling or nipping, you will be required to remove the guide dog/service dog/service animal from the school immediately. In such a case, alternative options for accommodation will be reviewed.

Sincerely,

Principal/Board Personnel

Public Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals

Appendix E

Sample Letter - Decision Letter Declining Guide Dog / Service Dog / Service Animal

Date

Dear Parent, Guardian or Visitor

I am writing to communicate the decision regarding your request that you attend school/board facility with a guide dog/service dog/service animal to provide accommodation for disability-related learning needs/acts of daily living.

Please be advised that your request is being denied.

As we have discussed, you are not able to perform the responsibilities of a handler [and/or the service animal is not trained and may be disruptive or a distraction in the school environment], and reasonable alternative accommodations that respect your dignity and facilitate integration are available to support your needs and access to school/board facility activities and events.

This decision is not subject to appeal, however, if you wish to discuss the alternative accommodation measures available to support you while at a school/board facility activity or event, please contact me to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,

Principal/Board Personnel