



PROCEDURE

SO124

Use of Service Dogs

Board Received: November 23, 2015

Review Date: December 2019

Accountability:

1. Frequency of Reports – As needed
2. Criteria for Success
 - Dogs are properly certified
 - Proper documentation provided to the school/Board
 - Dog behaviour is consistent with the needs of the student/employee

Definition:

A service dog is a working animal trained by a recognized service/training facility, currently defined under Ontario Regulation 58 – Guide Dogs. A certified service dog is allowed full public access in the province of Ontario and is trained to perform the skills required to meet the needs of the student/staff with whom it has been partnered. These animals provide a number of services to the persons who are diagnosed with disabilities such as Physical, Blind or Low Vision, Deaf/Hearing Impaired, Physical Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder or a seizure disorder. Service dogs may be used by individuals to support them with daily living and accessibility.

Background

The *Human Rights Code* and *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* describe disability to mean:

- a) any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defects 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 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 (handicap).
- f) This list is not exhaustive.

Service Dogs

A Service Dog provides independence, dignity, and confidence to the handler. These dogs become part of the family. Praise and reward is given by the client to establish a loving working relationship

Students/staff can sometimes wait up to two (2) years for a service dog. Ideally, once a person or the parents /guardians have been informed that they have been offered the opportunity to have a service dog, they should inform the work site /school so that the work site /school can prepare for the arrival of the dog.

Service dogs can provide support for many disabilities, including, but not limited to the following specific examples.

Physical Disabilities

Service Dogs are trained to assist persons with lifelong physical challenges such as Spina Bifida or Cerebral Palsy. As well, those with acquired disabilities such as Multiple Sclerosis, a seizure disorder or a disorder from a permanent injury are candidates for a Service Dog. Dogs matched with physically disabled clients may be trained to pull wheelchairs, turn light switches on and off, open doors, take laundry out of the dryer, or retrieve dropped items. They may assist persons into or out of bed, help them dress or undress, or even change their position in bed, if needed. As well, they can assist those who have seizures by barking to get help or activating an alert system.

Visually Impaired

Service Dogs may be provided to blind or visually impaired persons. Emphasis during the training and placement of Guide Dogs is on safety with the aim of increasing the person's independence and mobility. Guide Dogs will help lead a person safely across streets, around obstacles, and overhangs.

Autism

Service dogs have been shown to improve communication skills, lifestyle and behaviour both in the home and school settings. Service dogs also help to increase their levels of safety, independence, confidence and social acceptance.

Procedures

1. Parents/adult students/ employees will provide notice to the school and include reasons, descriptions of activity and proposed duration of the need for the service dog.
2. In order to develop the best possible entry plan for the service dog,
 - a) parents will be requested to provide, to the school principal, a letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the College of Psychologists, confirming the student's diagnosis, as well as a recommendation for the use of a service dog.
 - b) employees will be requested to provide, to the Board's Health and Disability Officer, a letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the College of Psychologists, confirming recommendation for the use of a service dog in the workplace.
3. The parent/adult student/employee member is informed that a certificate of training for the dog from a recognized training agency must be provided and that all costs related to the service dog, including, but not limited to food, equipment, health care, remain the financial responsibility of the parent/adult student/staff member
4. Information regarding the service dog, as well as the student's medical diagnosis will be retained in the student's OSR (Ontario School Record). If the service dog is for a staff member, information regarding the service dog will be retained in the employee's health and disability file in Human Resources.
5. The school will coordinate the needs or other information contained in a student's IEP (Individual Education Plan) with the use of the service dog.

6. The principal will meet with the parent/adult student to discuss the potential impact of the request on the school community. The principal/supervisor will meet with the employee and the Board's Health and Disability Officer as part of the employee's Accommodation Plan and to discuss the potential impact of the request on the school community or worksite. The principal will inform the Superintendent of Education responsible for Special Education that a service dog will be present at the school.
7. The principal will have extensive information sessions with support staff, school staff, the school council and community prior to the service dog arriving at school. During the information sessions with the broader school community, the anonymity of the student and the family or staff member will be maintained. A plan for entry of the service dog will be created, including provisions for daily bio-breaks in designated areas and proper waste disposal. In the case of a non-school site, the site supervisor will consult with the staff assigned to that location.
8. The Superintendent of Education responsible for Special Education will send a letter to the parent/guardian/adult student/employee indicating that the service dog is welcome after entry plans are completed. School staff will be supportive of the service dog. If the student is entering school, the service dog should be included in the transition plan; if the student is currently in attendance at a school, observation of the student with the service dog prior to entry will be part of the plan.
9. A student's/staff member's plan for entry with a service dog will include a case conference involving the parents/guardians (for a student), the involved staff member, the Principal, Classroom Teacher (for a student), the Learning Resource Teacher (for a student), the Health & Disability Officer (for staff), a representative of recognized service dog training agency, the student where appropriate, Principal Leader - Special Education and Teacher Consultant – Special Education. Topics to be addressed will include:
 - the purpose/function of the dog
 - care of the dog (rests 100% with student and parent/guardian or the staff member)
 - personal care of the dog, i.e., where the dog's water bowl is kept; who will fill the water bowl ensure appropriate employees are informed
 - examine the seating arrangements and lay-out of classroom

Following the student's case conference, the following steps will occur:

- letter is sent home to the school community about the arrival of the service dog (see Appendix A)
- meeting arranged with the School Council to inform them about service dogs .
- inform Union Stewards/Branch Presidents about service dogs and the arrival of the specific dog;
- liaison and professional development for staff, students and the school council with the appropriate service dog agency;
- problem-solving regarding potential concerns from staff, students and the community;
- protocol for dog and student during school day and in emergency situations is established, including the appropriate fire exit plan, which is reviewed by the Fire Dept.;
- arrangement for dog and student, accompanied by parent, to visit the school before or after students are present in order for the dog to become familiar with the school environment
- observation, either live or on video, of specific techniques used with the student and dog; training of staff by the appropriate service dog agency;
- a sign alerting visitors to the dog's presence will be placed on the doors of the school.
- an assembly arranged for the student body involving a service dog training agency and the dog handler to explain the role of the dog.

12. If needed, transportation must be arranged for a student and his/her service dog. Under the Human Rights Code and the Blind Persons' Rights Act, the Board must allow the service dog to ride the bus.
13. The following protocol for students is suggested for a safe ride with service dogs:
 - STSBHN (Student Transportation Services Brant Haldimand Norfolk) will obtain proof from the school principal that the service dog is a licenced, trained animal and will travel on a vehicle with other students;
 - the bus operator will ensure there is documentation about the guide dog/service dog with the route information, so there are no surprises for a spare driver;
 - the service dog should not sit in the aisle of the bus. Whenever possible, it should be in the seat compartment and/or on the floor away from the aisle to prevent it from becoming a projectile or tripping hazard;
 - the bus operator will request some basic training from the parent/guardian and/or the service dog provider for the driver, and other students on board the bus to ensure there is an understanding of what is allowed or not allowed with all parties
 - Principal will consult STSBHN Procedure 39 Transportation with Service Animals to ensure all forms and directions are provided to parents/guardians or adult students.
14. The school's/worksite's protocol regarding the service dog will be reviewed annually (within the first thirty school days of each school year) or as deemed necessary by school administration, site supervisor, the Health & Disability Officer, or the student's parent/guardian or staff member.

Appendix 'A'

School Letterhead

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Service Dog in our school assisting one of our students. This dog is a highly trained companion for our student and is able to assist him/her in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for him/her.

Service Dogs are included in every aspect of life for the handler. The right to access to a service dog is protected under Human Rights legislation, and, as such, the dog has the right to be with the handler wherever he/she goes (e.g., public buildings, transportation).

There will be information sessions planned here at school to integrate the dog into our school routines and all our students will be instructed as to the proper procedure around the dog.

As always, we will respect the interests of all our students in providing a safe and effective learning environment here at (name of school).

Sincerely,

Principal