

GUIDE DOGS AND SERVICE DOGS IN SCHOOLS

Background

Guide dogs and service dogs (hereinafter referred to as service dogs) are specifically trained to assist children and adults who have a physical or developmental disability. The use of trained service dogs is a recognized aid to children and adults with special needs. These trained dogs will be allowed in the school, on school district property and on school district buses when it has been determined that the service dog helps either the employee to perform the essential functions of their job or to enjoy benefits of employment comparable to those of similarly situated non-disabled employees or the student to have equal access to the services, programs or activities offered by the school district. In all instances, the school district's criteria approval process must be followed.

Definitions

Guide Dog A dog that is trained as a guide for a blind person, and is certified as a guide dog (British Columbia Guide Dog and Service Dog Act).

Service Dog A dog that is trained to perform specific tasks to assist a person with a disability and is certified as a service dog. (British Columbia Guide Dog and Service Dog Act). Service Dogs are trained to perform a wide variety of tasks including but not limited to, pulling a wheelchair, bracing, retrieving, alerting to a medical crisis and providing assistance in a medical crisis.

Assistance Dog A generic term for guide, hearing or service dog specifically trained to do more than one task to mitigate the effects of an individual's disability. The presence of a dog for protection, personal defence, or comfort **does not qualify** that dog as an assistance dog.

Procedures

1. Criteria for Use of Service Animals in Schools

The service dog must be trained and certified by a training school accredited by either or both the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) or Assistance Dogs International (ADI) or certified by the Justice Institute of British Columbia. In any and all cases the dog/team should be able to present the British Columbia Guide Dog and Assistance Dog Provincial ID Card.

2. Application

Those requiring the use of a guide/service dog must provide the following information:

- 2.1 Provide a letter to the school district requesting the service dog admittance. In the case of a student, the letter must outline the benefits of having a service dog attend school with the child and include their plan for the care and supervision of the service dog while in school.
- 2.2 Provide a letter of recommendation from an appropriate professional confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need, including a recommendation for the use of a service dog.

- 2.3 Provide a Certificate of Training for the service dog from an organization accredited by either the International Guide Dog Federation or Assistance Dogs International.
- 2.4 Arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the assistance dog, including at least one bio-break per day and providing appropriate bedding (e.g., bed or blanket) and water bowl.
- 2.5 Accept responsibility for the actions of the assistance dog by signing a school district release of liability.
- 2.6 Attain and provide the school district with a copy of liability insurance that covers possible injuries or property damage.
- 2.7 Annually, provide the school district with proof of a municipal dog license, proof of annual re-certification from the appropriate agency and proof of up-to-date vaccinations provided by a doctor of veterinary medicine confirming the service dog is in good health.

3. School District/School Responsibilities

The school district shall not be responsible for the training, feeding, grooming or care of any service dog permitted in school district buildings or to ride on school buses under this operational procedure. The school district must approve any person who is authorized to assist in the care and supervision of the service dog while on school property.

- 3.1 School community consultation (staff and parents at a minimum).
- 3.2 Arrange a meeting with the employee or, in the case of a student, the parents/guardians, the dog handler, classroom teacher(s), appropriate student support staff, a representative from the appropriate agency, the student (when appropriate) other consultants if necessary, and the director of learning support services to discuss:
 - 3.2.1 The purpose and function of the service dog;
 - 3.2.2 The role/duties of the service dog handler;
 - 3.2.3 The personal care and physical needs of the service dog including;
 - The safest and most environmentally sound place for the service dog to relieve itself.
 - Removal and disposal of animal waste.
 - Provisions of a suitable container for waste.
 - Considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather.
 - 3.2.4 Classroom or worksite considerations such as seating arrangements;
 - 3.2.5 Any necessary considerations for routine, procedures and/or program changes;
 - 3.2.6 Arrangement for the service dog to visit the school or worksite outside of regular hours in order to familiarize it with the building prior to commencement of services;
 - 3.2.7 Development of a transition plan and timetable for the service dog and the student or employee, as well as rules of conduct around the service dog for students, staff and the public. The timetable must include the introduction of the service dog to the school and class and for the training of the student's school team (principal, teacher(s), education assistant(s), etc.; and
 - 3.2.8 Disseminating and regulating such rules.

4.3 Notifications

- 4.3.1 The following letters shall be forwarded to all students or colleagues, to inform:
- 4.3.1.1 Of the arrival of the service dog, its purpose, rules and regulations regarding the existence of the service dog. (Form 153-1 – Service Dog in School – Letter to the School Community);
 - 4.3.1.2 The other students or colleagues where the service dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies or extreme phobias. (Form 153-2 – Letter to the Families of Children in the Class(es) and/or Bus); and
 - 4.3.1.3 The students who will be sharing transportation where the service dog will be present (Form 153-2 – Letter to the Families of Children in the Class(es) and/or Bus).
- 4.3.2 Retain all letters regarding the service dog in the student’s confidential permanent record file or the employee’s personnel file.
- 4.3.3 Inform all staff including teachers, education assistants, custodians, support staff, volunteers and health and safety representatives of the presence of the service dog(s).
- 4.3.4 Contact the school district transportation department regarding any transportation requirement.

5. Familiarization Within the School or Worksite’s Community

Arrange for demonstrations from the parent and/or appropriate agency for the student body, staff and the community, as required, to provide education and awareness of service dogs.

6. Emergency Procedures

Revise emergency procedures as required to include the service dog, such as evacuation, and notify the fire department regarding the existence of the service dog.

7. Removing or Excluding a Service Dog

Although access to a service dog is a right, the district has a responsibility to maintain order and safety. The school district may limit, remove or exclude from school facilities or property any service dog that no longer is meeting the criteria for service dogs as outlined by the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), Assistance Dogs International (ADI), or the Justice Institute of British Columbia.

8. Transportation of the Service Dog

When approving a service dog for a student with a disability at school, the district may need to provide directions for transporting the student and the service dog.

- 8.1 The driver-should meet with the service dog’s owner. The owner is responsible for providing information to the driver regarding critical commands needed for daily interaction and emergency/evacuation.
- 8.2 The service dog’s owner should provide an orientation to students riding the bus with the service dog regarding the dog’s function and how students should interact with the animal.

- 8.3 The service dog should practice the bus evacuation drills with the students.
- 8.4 The service dog should be positioned on the floor, at the student's feet.
- 8.5 Transportation of a service dog could be terminated in instances where the service dog is no longer meeting the criteria for service dogs as outlined by the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), Assistance Dogs International (ADI), or the Justice Institute of British Columbia:
- 8.6.1 If transportation is suspended, transportation may be reinstated after additional training or medical issues are resolved. Parents should be informed of these consequences prior to the first day of transportation; and
- 8.6.2 Although transportation may be suspended for the service dog, the school district maintains the responsibility of transporting the student if they meet transportation criteria/eligibility in accordance with operational procedure 380 (Transportation).

9. Restrictions and Off-Limits for Service Dogs

The school district may impose some restrictions on service dogs for safety reasons for both the student and/or the service dog. The determination to restrict the access of a service dog to specific programs or areas of that school facility would be on a case-by-case basis, determined through the director of learning support services, principal, teacher, and parent(s).

10. Conflict Resolution

Employees, students/parents of a student with medical issues that are impacted by dogs (such as respiratory diseases) should contact the school principal or their supervisor if they have a concern about exposure to a service dog. The school principal in collaboration with the director of learning support services, or in the case of an employee, the director of human resources and/or the supervisor, and if necessary, a representative from the accredited organization, will facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the needs/accommodations of all persons involved.

11. Notice of Appeal

Any individual with a service dog who is aggrieved by the decision to remove, impose restrictions on or exclude a service dog may appeal that decision through the district's appeal process.

References: School Act
Guide Dog and Service Dog Act
Guide Dog and Service Dog Regulations
B.C. Human Rights Code
Assistance Dogs International's Guide to Assistance Dog Law
International Guide Dog Federation – Canada

Related Forms: [Form 153-1 Service Dog in School – Letter to the School Community](#)
[Form 153-2 Service Dog – Letter to the Families of Children in the Class\(es\) and/or Bus](#)

Related Procedures: OP 154 Therapy Dogs in Schools