

Procedure 605.6 Use of Service Dogs

1. Parents or guardians wishing to use a service dog to support their child's program must:

- a) provide a letter outlining the benefits of having the service dog attend with their child, descriptions of the service dog's intended activities, and the duration of the support.
- b) complete the *Request for a Certified Service Dog* form 605.6 and attach it to the aforementioned letter.
- c) provide a letter from a physician confirming that the student's need for the use of a service dog in school is essential and directly related to the learning needs of the student.
- d) provide a copy of the Service Dog Team Identification Card issued by the Government of Alberta. All financial costs to obtain this card are the sole responsibility of the family.
- e) provide up-to-date proof of vaccinations, licensing, insurance and ensure the dog is in good health. This must be done annual if the dog is accepted into the school to ensure continued eligibility.
- f) provide for the personal care and physical needs of the service dog. This includes the need for "bio-breaks", disposal of waste, provision of food, water, and a kennel.
- g) work with the school principal to schedule training for the student's school team by the service dog organization in order to educate the student body in the school about the role of the service dog and the rules of conduct concerning the dog. This process will be ongoing as staff changes, grade changes, and other circumstances warrant additional training.
- h) provide the school with signage (generally provided by the service dog organization) alerting visitors and emergency service providers to the service dog's presence.
- i) pay for any financial implications regarding the training, use and care of the service dog.

2. When a principal receives a written request for permission to have a service dog accompany a student to school, the principal will:

- a) inform the Director, Student Services and the Associate Superintendent, Instructional Services of the request.
- b) arrange a case conference involving parents, teacher(s), classroom assistants, a representative of the service dog organization, and appropriate Student Services personnel to discuss the following:
 - notification and involvement of classroom staff.
 - review the purpose and function of the service dog in relation to successful learning and/or safety for the student.
 - clarify all responsibilities of the family, school, and Division.

- transportation of the student and service dog.
 - who will accompany and handle the service dog both inside and outside the school, and what arrangements have been made with regard to alternate handlers when necessary.
 - other concerns including: interference with delivery of an educational program, possible changes to in-class routines and procedures, increased demands on staff, other children who are allergic to dogs, recognition of children with fear of dogs, cultural sensitivities to groups that will not share space with an animal.
 - development of a comprehensive transition plan for the introduction of the dog which may involve the use of social stories, visits by the dog to the school and classroom, etc.
- c) inform school staff, school council representatives and parents of the potential arrival of a service dog to the school.
- d) send a specific letter home to the parents of students who will be in any of the classes or classrooms where the dog will possibly be present in case of allergies, anxieties or other concerns.
- e) work with appropriate personnel to revise emergency and safety procedures, as required, to include the service dog.

Upon completion of 2a – 2e above, the principal will forward all relevant information to the Director, Student Services and the Associate Superintendent, Instructional Services.

3. Parents or guardians of students eligible for transportation services must contact the transportation co-ordinator to ensure all bus policies are followed when transporting the student and dog to and from school on the school bus.

4. A decision on the admittance of the service dog into the learning environment will be finalized by the Associate Superintendent, Instructional Services, based upon the recommendation of the school principal and the Director, Student Services as well as a review of submitted documentation pertaining to the:

- student's educational needs,
- fulfillment of family responsibilities, and
- fulfillment of school and Division responsibilities to all stakeholders, including liability.

5. At the end of each year, the student's learning team will review the student's program needs related to the service dog. This includes the school's input with regard to monitoring the service dog's capacity to provide the target service. Decisions regarding the appropriate use of the service dog, program planning, and training need to be considered. If the service dog is deemed essential, comprehensive transition planning for future teachers, staff, students, transportation providers and the wider community must occur.

6. On occasion, circumstances of possible conflicting rights may occur (eg. Other individuals in the class may have allergies or fear of dogs.) Employees, students or parents/guardians of students with medical issues that are impacted by animals (such as respiratory diseases) should contact the school Principal if they have a concern about exposure to a service dog. That individual will be asked to provide medical documentation that identifies the disability and the need for an

accommodation. The school Principal will facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the conflicting needs/accommodation of all persons involved.

7. Any student or parent/guardian of a student with a service dog who is aggrieved by the school principal's decision to remove, limit or exclude a service dog may appeal that decision to the Superintendent of the Division. The appeal must be in writing and must provide detailed information regarding the basis of the appeal.

8. A copy of all service dog request documentation will be placed in the cumulative file of the student requiring the service dog.

References

Alberta School Act: Section 47

Legal reference: Human Rights Act:
http://www.qp.alberta.ca/570.cfm?frm_isbn=9780779752904&search_by=link

Alberta Service Dogs Act:
<http://humanservices.alberta.ca/disability-services/service-dogs.html>.

Division Policies: Policy 605.1 Inclusive Learning Supports