

**Date of Issue**                    January 22, 2010

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**Subject**                            **USE OF SERVICE DOGS BY STUDENTS**

**References**                        1. Education Act  
   2. Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001  
   3. Ontario Human Rights Code  
   4. Blind Person's Rights Act  
   5. Individual Education Plan: A Resource Guide 2004

**Links**                                FORM A8535 – 1; FORM A8535 – 2; FORM A8535 – 3;  
   FORM A8535 – 4; FORM A8535 - 5

**Contact**                            Instructional Services

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**1. Purpose**

The use of specially trained service dogs is one strategy used to accommodate the special needs of some students. This procedure provides direction to school administrators regarding the admittance and implementation of service dogs into the school environment.

**2. Background**

2.1 This APM outlines two procedures: one for “service dogs” (including guide dogs, assistance dogs, and skills dogs) and one for “companion dogs” (including dogs that provide comfort and friendship to students who may have emotional, self-esteem, or social problems).

2.2 For the purpose of this APM, a “service dog” is considered to be an accommodation that is required to allow a student to access the Ontario Curriculum. Accommodations refer to specialized supports that enable a student to learn and to demonstrate learning (*The Individual Education Plan (IEP) A Resource Guide, 2004*, p.25). A “companion dog” is not considered to be an accommodation as it is generally not required to allow the student to access the Ontario Curriculum (**See APPENDIX A: Background Information**).

2.3 The *Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001* and *Human Rights Code* provide authority for service dogs to accompany their handlers in all public places including schools and buses. Service dogs and their handlers receive specialized training to work together, and consequently the dogs should present minimal risk to or impact on other people.



- 2.4 When parents approach the school principal requesting the use of a dog, the principal must check to determine if the request is for a service dog or a companion dog. A request for a companion dog may be denied.

### 3. **Individual Consideration for Approval**

- 3.1 Decisions regarding the admittance and implementation of service dogs and companion dogs into the school environment are made on a case-by-case basis. All circumstances of a particular case, including the individual needs of the student being assisted by the dog, and the needs of other students and staff will be considered. Where necessary in the decision making process, rights and needs of one person may have to be balanced against the rights and needs of another.
- 3.2 Entry of service dogs or companion dogs is decided after extensive consultation and is not automatically approved. The principal reviews the request with the Superintendent of Education and the Principal of Special Education.

### 4. **Procedures for the Implementation of Service Dogs in the School Environment**

- 4.1 Parents/guardians usually inform the principal that their child and a service dog are trained to work together, and have graduated from a recognized training centre. To initiate the process of having the dog assist the student in school, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must make the request in writing (**FORM A8535 - 1: Request for Service Dog Involvement With a Student**), and receive a copy of **Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service/Companion Dog in the School (APPENDIX B)**.
- 4.2 Parents/Guardians provide the principal with a letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons confirming the diagnosis of an exceptionality, as well as a recommendation for the use of a Certified Service Dog.
- 4.3 Parents/guardians must provide a letter from National Service Dogs Training Centre or equivalent registered organization stating that a Certified Service Dog has been placed with the child, and the date of formal Certified Service Dog Team recognition.
- 4.4 The principal will consult with the Superintendent of Education and the Principal of Special Education prior to planning the implementation process.
- 4.5 The principal will schedule a case conference with the parent(s)/guardian(s), a representative from the dog training school, the classroom teacher(s), the SERT, special education consultant, and the educational assistant(s) who work with the student. The purpose of the case conference is to review the IEP description of the student's needs, any IPRC recommendations, and the required accommodations including the type of service the dog will provide. The service provided by the dog must be consistent with the needs or recommendations of the IEP and/or the IPRC process.



- 4.6 The principal advises the parent that all costs related to the provision of the service dog are the financial responsibility of the parent. A certificate of training for the dog from the National Service Dogs Training Centre must be provided.
  - 4.7 Discussions will also include other relevant information such as safety considerations, (e.g. severe allergies, staff or students with asthma, fear of dogs etc.) the potential impact of the involvement of the dog on the school community, dog care requirements, handling routines and responsibilities, guidelines for staff and students, other student issues, transportation to school, the role of and communication with the parents/guardians, and the resources available to the school. Cultural sensitivities to animals may also need to be considered. A **Management Plan for the Care of the Service Dog (FORM A8535 - 2)** will be completed.
  - 4.8 The School Council advises the principal on matters pertaining to the school community. An information session for the Council and other interested community members will be held to inform them, and to receive feedback or relevant information. The principal will invite the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student needing the dog to participate in the information session.
  - 4.9 All school staff members, teaching and non-teaching, must be informed early in the process of the request to have a service dog in the school. Their input and information will assist the principal in the implementation process. Arrangements must be made to inform the relevant employee services that a service dog will be in the school.
  - 4.10 Signs must be placed on the entrance doors of the school to inform visitors of the dog's presence.
  - 4.11 Once a decision to approve the request is made, careful consideration of all the factors will facilitate the transition of the dog into the school environment. Attention to consistency, routines, communication, staff in-service, school assemblies, and community notification are required.
  - 4.12 An appropriate fire and emergency exit plan must be developed. Personnel from the local fire/police departments may be available to assist with the plan.
  - 4.13 **FORM A8535 – 4** provides an administrative checklist for implementation of a service dog into a school environment.
5. **Procedures for Decision-Making re: Companion Dog in the School Environment**
- 5.1 Parents/guardians must request permission in writing and include reasons, descriptions of activity, duration of the intervention (**FORM A8535 - 3: Request for Companion Dog Involvement with a Student**) and receive a copy of **APPENDIX B: Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting A Service /Companion Dog in the School**.
  - 5.2 Parents must provide a letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the College of Psychologists confirming the diagnosis of the exceptionality, as well as a recommendation for the use of a companion dog.



- 5.3 Parents must provide a letter from the National Service Dogs Training Centre, or equivalent registered organization, stating that a certified companion dog has been placed with the child and the date of formal certificate companion dog team recognition. The principal will consult with the Superintendent of Education and the Principal of Special Education prior to planing the implementation process.
- 5.4 The principal will consult with the Superintendent of Education and the Principal of Special Education prior to making the decision.
- 5.5 The principal advises the parent all costs related to the provision of the companion dog are the financial responsibility of the parent. A certificate of training for the dog from the National Service Dogs Training Centre or equivalent registered organization, must be provided.
- 5.6 The principal will schedule a case conference with the parent(s)/guardian(s), a representative from the dog training school, the classroom teacher(s), the SERT, special education consultant, and the educational assistant(s) who work with the student. The purpose of the case conference is to review the IEP description of the student's needs, any IPRC recommendations, and the required accommodations including the type of service the dog will provide. The service provided by the companion dog must be consistent with the needs or recommendations of the IEP and/or the IPRC process.
- 5.7 Discussions will also include other relevant information such as safety considerations,(e.g. severe allergies, staff or students with asthma, fear of dogs etc.) the potential impact of the involvement of the dog on the school community, dog care requirements, handling routines and responsibilities, guidelines for staff and students, other student issues, transportation to school, the role of and communication with the parents/guardians and the resources available to the school. Cultural sensitivities to animals may also need to be considered. A **Management Plan for the Care of the Service/Companion Dog (FORM A8535 - 2) will be completed.**
- 5.8 The School Council advises the principal on matters pertaining to the school community. An information session for the Council and other interested community members will be held to inform them, and to receive feedback or relevant information. The principal will invite the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student needing the dog to participate in the information session.
- 5.9 All school staff members, teaching and non-teaching, must be informed early in the process of the request to have a companion dog in the school. Their input and information will assist the principal in the implementation process. Arrangements must be made to inform the relevant employee services that a companion dog will be in the school.
- 5.10 Signs must be placed on the entrance doors of the school to inform visitors of the dog's presence.



- 5.11 Once a decision to approve the request is made, careful consideration of all the factors will facilitate the transition of the dog into the school environment. Attention to consistency, routines, communication, staff in-service, school assemblies, and community notification are required.
- 5.12 A copy of the parent request, as well as the medical diagnosis, will be retained in the documentation file of the OSR.
- 5.13 **FORM A8535 – 5** provides an administrative checklist for implementation of a companion dog into a school environment.

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**Revised**

*Issued under the authority of the Director of Education*



### **Background Information**

A trained service dog performs specific tasks related to the specific disability of the student who may require its assistance in order to access the Ontario Curriculum. Examples include guide dogs for blind students and hearing dogs for deaf students. There are also dogs trained to assist students with autism, and medical conditions such as epilepsy. A request for a service dog may not be refused.

Companion dogs may provide comfort and friendship to a person who has social, self-esteem or emotional problems. Their assistance is generally not required to allow a student to access the Ontario Curriculum. A request for a companion dog may be refused.

Dogs used by students in schools must be registered in Canada, and be trained by a recognized dog training centre.

#### **National Service Dogs** (a member of Assistance Dogs International – ADI)

Since 1996 National Service Dogs Training Centre Inc. (NSD), has been training and placing Certified Service Dogs with children in North America who have disabilities. Under the Disabilities Rights Act, the Public Access Law, and the Human Rights Code individuals accompanied by a Certified Service Dog cannot be denied service or access to public places.

A Service Dog, when well-trained and supported, not only demonstrates its trained tasks but can also support increased safety, support increased social bonding, and support self-control for individuals with a disability such as autism.

A Certified Service Dog (certified by NSD, Canada's only recognized Training Centre for the certification of trained service dogs working with children who have autism) is not the same as a companion dog or therapy dog. A Certified Service Dog is a recognized working dog and strict guidelines apply for the access, handling, and interaction with these dogs.

When parents approach the principal requesting the use of a service dog, please check to see whether it is a certified service dog or a companion dog that they are requesting. The difference is delineated above, a companion dog can be refused, and a service dog cannot.

#### **Hearing Ear Dogs of Canada**

On May 30, 1988, Hearing Ear Dogs of Canada became the next project of the Lions Foundation of Canada.

These dogs are trained to alert deaf and hearing-impaired people to every day sounds, and brings independence and new confidence to their silent lives.

This program usually trains small to medium sized dogs about a year old who display that they are friendly and willing to work. The dogs are medically checked and then begin a six month training program in a simulated home environment at the training centre. They are taught to distinguish sounds, make physical contact with the handler and lead the person to the sound.



Applicants must be at least seventeen years of age, living independently and be able to care for a dog. Successful applicants then begin a two week program to learn how to work and bond with their dog guide. The dog is custom trained to respond to the sounds particular to the client's home – a baby crying, kettle boiling, phone ringing, etc. The dog can also be trained to respond to hand signals if the new owner cannot speak clearly to give verbal commands. Our certified Hearing Ear Dogs are distinguished by the internationally recognized bright orange collar and leash that is stenciled with "HEARING EAR DOGS OF CANADA".

### **Lions Foundation of Canada**

In addition to training Dog Guides for people who are blind or visually impaired, the Foundation also trains Dog Guides to meet the needs of Canadians with hearing and other medically and physically limiting disabilities. The three Dog Guide programs include:

- Canine Vision Canada Dog
- Special Skills Dogs of Canada
- Hearing Ear Dogs of Canada



**INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS REQUESTING A SERVICE/COMPANION DOG IN THE SCHOOL**

1. The success of the implementation of a service dog into a school setting depends on clear communication, a well-informed school community and careful planning. The information you provide will assist the principal to make the best possible decisions for your child and other students as well as for the staff, volunteers and visitors in the school. The information will be filed in your child's Ontario Student Record (OSR).
2. The use of a service dog is considered to be an accommodation to help your child learn and to develop the necessary skills to achieve success at school. The use of a companion dog is generally not considered to be an accommodation under the Ontario Curriculum. If your child already has an Individual Education Plan, it will be reviewed at a case conference, or one will be developed in consultation with you. The principal will invite you, your child's teacher, a representative from the training centre, the Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT) in the school, and the special education consultant to the case conference to discuss your child's needs, the accommodations that are already in place for your child, as well as the additional assistance provided by a service dog.
3. The information you provide will help the principal to implement your request. It is important that you provide the information that addresses the safety of the students and staff. For example, the principal needs to know that the dog has no history of nipping, biting or growling at children or adults, nor exhibits aggressive protective behaviours. The principal also needs to know if any student or member of staff has severe medical or psychological reactions to dogs that may prevent or restrict the involvement of the dog at the school.
4. The well-being of the dog is also very important. Its care, handling and training needs will be addressed, and your input as a trained handler is valuable. The principal also needs to know what other resources are available to facilitate the transition to school and the implementation of the plan. Strategies for becoming familiar with the building and school grounds, introduction to assemblies/ concerts, recess, and informing the staff about interacting with the dog will need to be included in the planning to be as consistent and fair to the dog as possible.
5. The School Council advises the principal on matters pertaining to the school community. It is customary to provide an information session for the council and other interested parents. It is our experience that important information shared in this way facilitates understanding and acceptance of new practices at the school. You will be asked to participate in the information session.
6. After all the discussion and planning is in place, the goal will be to implement the plan as soon as possible.



7. Your responsibilities include:
  - transporting or walking the dog to and from school, or facilitating the use of bus transportation,
  - providing the required equipment and dog care items,
  - assuming financial responsibility for the dog's training, veterinary care, and other related costs,
  - working co-operatively with the school staff to make this accommodation a success,
  - assisting the principal to communicate relevant information to the school community,
  - providing the principal with required documentation in a timely fashion, and
  - informing the principal of all relevant information that may affect the students and staff.
  
8. Once the necessary information has been discussed, the principal will consult with the Superintendent of Education and the Principal of Special Education prior to the admittance and implementation of the service dog into the school.
  
9. If your request is approved a series of planning steps must take place to ensure a smooth transition for the entry of the service dog.



**REQUEST FOR SERVICE DOG INVOLVEMENT WITH A STUDENT**

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_ D.O.B. \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of parent(s)/guardians(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

a) I/We request that \_\_\_\_\_ be allowed to use a service dog at school and at school-related activities.

b) Service the dog will provide the student with:

c) Length of time the student and dog have worked together? \_\_\_\_\_

d) Duration of this requested intervention? \_\_\_\_\_

e) Additional information that will assist the principal (e.g. safety, behaviour, or temperament of the dog issues).

- f) I/We understand that it is our responsibility to
- transport or walk the dog to and from school, or facilitate the use of bus transportation
  - provide the required equipment and dog care items,
  - assume financial responsibility for the dog's training, veterinary care, and, other related costs,
  - work co-operatively with the school staff to make this accommodation a success,
  - assist the principal to communicate relevant information to the school community,
  - provide the principal with required documentation in a timely fashion, and
  - inform the principal of all relevant information that may affect our child, the other students, and/or staff

g) I/we give permission for this information to be shared with the school community.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent(s)/guardian(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**For office use only:**

Request approved \_\_\_\_\_

Request not approved \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Management Plan for the Care of the Service/Companion Dog**

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_ D.O.B.: \_\_\_\_\_

O.E.N. : \_\_\_\_\_ School year: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of dog: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) responsible in the school environment: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Where possible and feasible, these responsibilities should be handled by the student in the same manner as at home. Care of the animal is also a skill to be taught.

**Water needs:** (e.g. provision of water bowl, procedures for use, cleaning etc.)

**Bladder/Bowel Needs of Dog** (e.g. – frequency, location, disposal etc.)

**Other considerations** (e.g. rest periods away from work, hot and winter weather, etc.)

1. Rest periods away from 'work'  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Hot weather \_\_\_\_\_

3. Winter weather \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Principal \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of parent/guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



**REQUEST FOR COMPANION DOG INVOLVEMENT WITH A STUDENT**

Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_ D.O.B.: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of parent(s)/guardians(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

a) I/We request that \_\_\_\_\_ be allowed to use a service dog at school and at school-related activities.

b) Service the dog will provide the student with:

c) Length of time the student and dog have worked together. \_\_\_\_\_

d) Duration of this requested intervention. \_\_\_\_\_

e) Additional information that will assist the principal (e.g. safety, behaviour, or temperament of the dog issues).

- f) I/We understand that it is our responsibility to
- Transport or walk the dog to and from school, or facilitate the use of bus transportation,
  - provide the required equipment and dog care items,
  - assume financial responsibility for the dog's training, veterinary care, and, other related costs,
  - work co-operatively with the school staff to make this accommodation a success,
  - assist the principal to communicate relevant information to the school community,
  - provide the principal with required documentation in a timely fashion, and
  - inform the principal of all relevant information that may affect our child, the other students, and/or staff

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent(s)/guardian(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**For office use only:**

Request approved \_\_\_\_\_ Request not approved \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal \_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**Administrative Checklist for Implementation of Service Dog into a School Environment**

Task	Date completed
Advise parent/guardian and student 18 years and older, making the request that the Simcoe County D.S.B. has a procedure to follow before a decision is made.	
Provide parent(s)/guardian(s) with the form <b>Request for Service Dog Involvement With a Student (FORM A8535 - 1)</b> , and <b>Information for Parents / Guardians Requesting a Service Dog in the School (APPENDIX B)</b> .	
Inform Superintendent of Education and Principal of Special Education of the request.	
Convene a case conference with the following in attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parents/guardians and/or student over the age of 18</li> <li>• classroom teachers(s)</li> <li>• SERT</li> <li>• special education consultant</li> <li>• representative from the dog training centre</li> <li>• educational assistant(s) who work with the student.</li> </ul>	
Review the request with respect to its consistency with the IEP and/or recommendations from the IPRC.	
Receive copies of the required documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ copy of recommendation for service dog</li> <li>▪ copy of dog's registration with a recognized training centre</li> <li>▪ copy of current, official vaccination certificate for the dog</li> <li>▪ proof the dog is registered in Canada</li> <li>▪ documentation from member(s) of the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons</li> <li>▪ copy of training certification of parent(s)/guardian(s)</li> <li>▪ proof of municipal dog license, if applicable</li> </ul>	
Inform school staff that a request has been made and receive their input.	
Inform appropriate bus contact that a request has been made and receive their input.	
Inform School Council and community at a School Council meeting and receive their input.	
Meet with the parent(s)'guardian(s) and/or student 18 years or older, to inform them of the information you have received, and to review the implementation plan, including the fire and emergency exit plans, and Management Plan for the Care of the Dog ( <b>FORM A8535 - 2</b> ).	
Advise the Superintendent of Education and the Principal of Special Education of your actions.	
Develop a communication strategy to inform students, staff, community and relevant employee representatives.	
Post signs on the entrance doors, and at any other appropriate places to advise visitors of the dog's presence.	
Monitor and review the implementation on a regular basis.	
File relevant documentation and correspondence in the documentation file of student's OSR.	



**Administrative Checklist for Implementation of Companion Dog into A School Environment**

Task	Date completed
Advise parent/guardian and student 18 years and older making the request that the Simcoe County D.S.B. has a procedure to follow before a decision is made.	
Provide parent(s)/guardian(s) with the form <b>Request for Companion Dog Involvement with a Student (FORM A8535 - 3)</b> , and <b>Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Companion Dog in the School (APPENDIX B)</b> .	
Inform Superintendent of Education and Principal of Special Education of the request.	
Convene a case conference with the following in attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parents/guardians and/or student over the age of 18</li> <li>• classroom teachers(s)</li> <li>• SERT</li> <li>• Special Education Consultant</li> <li>• representative from the dog training centre</li> <li>• educational assistant(s) who work with the student</li> <li>• Proof of municipal dog license, if applicable.</li> </ul>	
Review the request with respect to its consistency with the IEP and/or recommendations from the IPRC.	
Receive copies of the required documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ copy of recommendation for service dog</li> <li>▪ copy of dog's registration with a recognized training centre</li> <li>▪ copy of current, official vaccination certificate for the dog</li> <li>▪ proof the dog is registered in Canada</li> <li>▪ documentation from member(s) of the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons</li> <li>▪ copy of training certification of parent(s)/guardian(s).</li> </ul>	
Inform school staff that a request has been made and receive their input.	
Inform appropriate bus contact that a request has been made and receive their input.	
Inform School Council and community at a School Council meeting and receive their input.	
Meet with the parent(s)'guardian(s) and/or student 18 years or older to inform them of the information you have received, and to advise them of your recommendation to the superintendent of education and the principal of special education.	
Advise the Superintendent of Education and the Principal of Special Education of your recommendations and decision. If the request is approved continue with the next steps in this checklist.	
Develop a communication strategy to inform students, staff, community and relevant employee representatives.	
Post signs on the entrance doors, and at any other appropriate places to advise visitors of the dog's presence.	
Monitor and review the implementation on a regular basis	
File relevant documentation and correspondence in the documentation file of the student's OSR.	