

Kelsey School Division Box 4700 The Pas, MB R9A 1R4	Code: IHBA
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SERVICE/ASSISTANCE DOGS IN SCHOOLS

This policy provides direction to school administrators regarding requests for use of service dogs in school.

A. Definitions:

1. A “Certified Service/Assistance Dog” is a recognized working dog that has been trained to assist children and adults who have a physical or developmental disability with their daily living activities. There are strict guidelines that apply to their access, handling, and interaction. The use of service dogs in the schools is an intervention strategy that is recognized as an aid to children with Special Needs.
2. “Service Dogs” refers to dogs that assist those with a physical disability, and include pulling, bracing, retrieving, and hearing dogs. Service dogs are also trained to prevent children from leaving the classroom unsupervised, running into traffic, etc.
3. “Guide Dogs for the Blind & Visually Impaired” focus on increased independent travel for the individual. The guide dog is trained for safe street crossings, using public transportation, and exposure to all environments. Users of guide dogs will have previous mobility training in the school system or adult agencies for blind and visually impaired.
4. “Companion Dogs” are a support to assist the learning behaviour of some students. Therapy dogs are trained to provide affection and comfort to people in hospitals, retirement homes, and schools. Companion dogs and therapy dogs are not considered service dogs with access for the handlers in places of public accommodation.

B. Roles and Responsibilities

When a school principal receives a request for the use of a service dog, the decision regarding such use is made on a case-by-case basis and includes the individual needs of the student being assisted. The request is reviewed by the Principal with the Student Services Coordinator and Superintendent following the procedures below.

C. Parent’s Responsibilities

1. Provide a letter to the school requesting permission for a Service Dog and outlining the benefits of having a Service Dog attend school with their child.
2. Provide a letter from a qualified professional (physician, psychologist) confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need, including a recommendation for the use of a Service Dog.

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3. Provide a Certificate of Training for the Service Dog from a certified training centre.
4. Pay for any financial implications regarding the use and care of the Service Dog.
5. Annually, provide the school with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, a municipal Service Dog licence, and confirmation that the Service Dog is in good health.
6. Arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the Service Dog, including a once a day bio-break procedure (attending to physical needs of the animal.)

D. Principal's Responsibilities

1. Ensure that the use of a Service Dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations as outlined in the IEP process.
2. Consult with the Superintendent and the Student Services Coordinator prior to arranging a case conference. The School Board's approval may be required prior to school entry.
3. Schedule and chair a meeting with parents/guardians, classroom teacher(s), appropriate Student Services staff, a representative from the dog training centre, the student when appropriate, and the Student Services Coordinator to discuss and develop a plan to determine the strengths, needs and required accommodations and type of service the service dog will provide.
4. Provide training for staff and students regarding the rules of conduct around the Service Dog.
5. Inform the school community of the arrival of the working Service Dog, its purpose, rules and regulations regarding the existence of the Service Dog at the school.
6. Inform all staff including teachers, educational assistants, custodians, all support staff, volunteers school council, union representatives, and health and safety representatives of the presence of service dogs.
7. Liaise with the Student Services Coordinator to resolve any specific concerns or issues raised regarding the presence of a Service Dog.
8. Revise emergency procedures as required to include the Service Dog, such as evacuations, and notification to the Fire Department regarding the existence of the Service Dog.
9. Retain all letters regarding the Service Dog in the student's cumulative file for a period of one year, or until superseded.

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E. Division Responsibilities

1. Contact the School Division Transportation Department regarding any transportation requirements.
2. Post signs on each entry door of the school to advise visitors of the presence of a working Service Dog.