

**THE PROTESTANT SEPARATE SCHOOL BOARD
OF THE TOWN OF PENETANGUISHENE**

POLICY MANUAL

**POLICY TITLE:
SECTION/CODE:**

Use of Service/Companion Animals by Students

School Operations D – 16F

APPROVAL DATE:

SUPERSEDES:

NUMBER OF PAGES:

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POLICY STATEMENT

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene (PSSBP) is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment for all students. Pursuant to the Ontario Human Rights Code, it is the policy of the board to provide students with disabilities, appropriate accommodations and services. The use of specially trained service dogs is one strategy used to accommodate the special needs of some students. The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA), the Human Rights Code and the Blind Persons Right Act provide authority for service dogs to accompany their handlers in all public places including school and buses. Service dogs and their handlers receive specialized training to work together, and consequently the animals should present minimal risk to or impact on other people.

PURPOSE

This policy provides direction to the school administrator regarding the admittance and implementation of service/companion animals into the school environment.

2. DEFINITIONS

Service Animal - a certified animal (certified meaning that both the animal and the handler have had training from a recognized Canadian training institution and the animal is registered as such in Canada), that provides supports and accommodation to students with a disability, where the accommodation allows 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)

Companion animal -" an animal that is not considered to provide an accommodation to students with disabilities, as it is generally not considered to be an accommodation and not required to allow the student to access the Ontario Curriculum (**See APPENDIX A: Background Information**).

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

1.Requests

1.0 When parents/guardians 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/animal. A request for a companion dog/animal may be denied.

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INDIVIDUAL CONSIDERATION FOR APPROVAL

2.0 Decisions regarding the admittance and implementation of service dogs and companion animals 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 animal, 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. A written response of the decision will be provided by the School Administration to the family in a timely manner.

Entry of service dogs or companion dog/animals is decided after extensive consultation and is not automatically approved. The Principal reviews the request with the Supervisory Officer.

4. PRODEDURES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SERVICE DOGS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

3.0 Parents/guardians must inform the Principal that their child and a service dog are trained to work together, and have graduated from a recognized training centre. It is the expectation of the Board that the student utilizing a certified service dog will be the service animal's handler. To initiate the process of having the animal assist the student in school, the parents/guardians must make the request in writing (**Request for Service Dog Involvement with a Student APPENDIX B**) and receive a copy of (**Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service /Companion Animal in the School APPENDIX C**)

Parents/guardians provide the Principal with a letter from a medical professional confirming the diagnosis of an exceptionality, as well as a recommendation for the use of a Certified Service Dog.

Parents/guardians must provide a letter from a registered organization stating that a Certified Service-Dog has been placed with the child, and the date of formal Certified Service Animal Team recognition.

The Principal will consult with the Supervisory Officer prior to planning the implementation process. 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.

The Principal will schedule a case conference with the parents/guardians, a representative from the animal training school may be in attendance if possible, 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

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consistent with the needs or recommendations of the IEP, the IPRC process, disability related or medical diagnosis needs.

The Principal advises the parent/guardian that all costs related to the provision of the service dog are the financial responsibility of the parent/guardian. A certificate of training for the animal must be provided.

Discussions will also include but are not limited to other relevant information such as safety considerations, (e.g. severe allergies, staff or students with asthma, fear of animals etc.) the potential impact of the involvement of the animal on the school community, animal 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 Animal form (APPENDIX D)** will be completed.

Signs must be placed on the entrance doors of the school to inform visitors of the animal's presence. Dependent upon the type of service dog, specific identifiable markers will be used to help identify the animal in the school environment.

Once a decision to approve the request is made, careful consideration of all the factors will facilitate the transition for the animal into the school environment. Attention to consistency, routines, communication, staff in-service and training, school assemblies, and community notification are required.

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.

APPENDIX F provides an administrative checklist for implementation of a service dog into a school environment.

Upon approval of a request the school staff must:

- Record the use of the service dog in the students Individual Education Plan (IEP), if appropriate
- Create a file that would consist of:
 1. The initial request (Appendix C)
 2. Letter from Medical Practitioner confirming diagnosis of an exceptionality and recommendation for the use of the certified service dog
 3. Certification documentation of the Service Dog
 4. A tracking sheet on annual vaccinations required for the service dog
 5. Management Plan for the Care of the Service /Companion Animal (Appendix D)
 6. Completed Administrative Checklist (Appendix F)

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All requests for service dogs will be communicated to the School Board to be tracked indicating:

- approvals and denials
- rational for denials and description of other supports and/or services provided
- species of service dog requested and approved
- types of needs to be supported

5. PROCEDURES FOR DECISION-MAKING RE: COMPANION ANIMAL IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- 5.1 Parents/guardians must request permission in writing and include reasons, descriptions of activity, duration of the intervention (**APPENDIX E: Request for Companion Animal Involvement with a Student**) and receive a copy of **APPENDIX B: Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting A Service/Companion Animal in the School**.
- 5.2 Parents/guardians must provide a letter from a medical professional confirming the diagnosis of the exceptionality, as well as a recommendation for the use of a companion animal.
- 5.3 Parents/guardians must provide a letter from a registered organization, stating that a certified companion animal has been placed with the child and the date of formal certificate companion animal team recognition. The Principal will consult with the Supervisory Officer prior to planning the implementation process.
- 5.4 The Principal will consult with the Supervisory Officer prior to making the decision.
- 5.5 The Principal will advise the parent/guardians that all costs related to the provision of the companion animal are the financial responsibility of the parent/guardian. A certificate of training for the animal a registered organization must be provided.
- 5.6 The Principal will schedule a case conference with the parents/guardians, a representative from the animal training school, the classroom teacher(s), the SERT, 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 animal will provide. The service provided by the companion animal must be consistent with the needs or recommendations of the IEP and/or the IPRC process.

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- 5.7 Discussions will also include other relevant information such as safety consideration, (e.g. severe allergies, staff or students with asthma, fear of animals etc.) the potential impact of the involvement of the animal on the school community, animal 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 Animal will be completed (APPENDIX D)**
- 5.8 All school staff members, teaching and non-teaching, must be informed early in the process of the request to have a companion animal 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 animal will be in the school.
- 5.9 Signs must be placed on the entrance doors of the school to inform visitors of the animal's presence.
- 5.10 Once a decision to approve the request is made, careful consideration of all the factors will facilitate the transition of the animal into the school environment. Attention to consistency, routines, communication, staff in-service, school assemblies, and community notification are required. A copy of the parent/guardian request, as well as the medical diagnosis, will be retained in the documentation file of the OSR.
- 5.11 **APPENDIX F** provides an administrative checklist for implementation of a companion animal into a school environment.

Acknowledgment

The Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene acknowledges and appreciates the contribution of the Simcoe County District School Board in the development of this policy.

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**APPENDIX A
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 animals trained to assist students with autism, and medical conditions such as epilepsy. A request for a service dog may not be refused.

Companion animals 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 animal may be refused.

Animals used by students in schools must be registered in Canada, and be trained by a recognized animal 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 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/guardians approach the Principal requesting the use of a service dog, please check to see whether it is a certified service dog or a companion animal that they are requesting. The difference is delineated above, a companion animal 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.

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**APPENDIX A – 2
Background Information Continued**

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 five verbal commands. Our certified Hearing Ear Dogs are distinguished by the internationally recognized bright orange collar and leash that is stencilled 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

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**APPENDIX B
INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS REQUESTING A SERVICE/COMPANION ANIMAL IN THE
SCHOOL**

1. The success of the implementation of a service /companion animal 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 animal 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 /companion animal.
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 animal 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 animals that may prevent or restrict the involvement of the animal at the school.
4. The well-being of the animal 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 animal will need to be included in the planning to be as consistent and fair to the animal as possible.

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**APPENDIX B – 2
INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS REQUESTING A SERVICE/COMPANION ANIMAL IN THE
SCHOOL - CONTINUED**

5. After all the discussion and planning is in place, the goal will be to implement the plan as soon as possible.

6. Your responsibilities include:

- transporting or walking the animal to and from school, or facilitating the use of bus transportation,
- providing the required equipment and animal care items,
- assuming financial responsibility for the animal'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.

7. Once the necessary information has been discussed, the Principal will consult with the Supervisory Officer prior to the admittance and implementation of the service animal into the school.

8. If your request is approved a series of planning steps must take place to ensure a smooth transition for the entry of the service /companion animal.

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**APPENDIX C
REQUEST FOR SERVICE-DOG INVOLVEMENT WITH A STUDENT**

Name of student: _____ D.O.B. _____

Address: _____

Name(s) of parents/guardians: _____

Telephone number(s): _____

Type of animal: _____

- a) I/We request that _____ be allowed to use a service animal 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)
- 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 animal 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 Parents/Guardians

Date

For office use only:

Request approved _____

Request not approved _____

Signature of Principal

Date

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**APPENDIX D
MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE CARE OF THE SERVICE/COMPANION ANIMAL**

Name of student: _____ D.O.B. _____

O.E.N.: _____ School year: _____

Name of Animal: _____

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 Animal (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: _____

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**APPENDIX E
REQUEST FOR COMPANION ANIMAL INVOLVEMENT WITH A STUDENT**

Name of student: _____ D.O.B. _____

Address: _____

Name(s) of parents/guardians: _____

Telephone number(s): _____

Type of animal: _____

Person(s) responsible in the school environment: _____

- a) I/We request that _____ be allowed to use a companion animal at school and at school-related activities.
- b) Type of service the animal will provide the student with: _____
- c) Length of time the student and animal 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 animal issues). _____
- f) I/We understand that it is our responsibility to
 - Transport or walk the animal to and from school, or facilitate the use of bus transportation,
 - provide the required equipment and animal care items,
 - assume financial responsibility for the animal'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 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 Parents /Guardians

Date

For office use only:

Request approved _____

Request not approved _____

Signature of Principal

Date

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APPENDIX F

Administrative Checklist for Implementation of Service Dog into a School Environment

Task	Date completed
Advise parent/guardian making the request that the Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene has a procedure to follow before a decision is made.	
Provide parents/guardians with the form Request for Service-Dog Involvement with a Student (Forms Policy D – 16 F Appendix C), and Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Dogs in the School (Forms Policy D – 16 F Appendix B)	
Inform The Supervisory Officer and Principal of Special Education of the request.	
Convene a case conference with the following in attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• parents/guardians• classroom teachers(s)• SERT• special education consultant• representative from the animal training centre• educational assistant(s) who work with the student	
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">• copy of recommendation for service dog• copy of animal's registration with a recognized training centre• copy of current, official vaccination certificate for the animal• proof the animal is registered in Canada• documentation from students medical professionals• copy of training certification of parents/guardians• proof of municipal license, if applicable	
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.	
Meet with the parents/guardians 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 Animal (Forms Policy D – 16 F Appendix D)	
Advise the Supervisory Officer 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 animal's presence.	
Monitor and review the implementation on a regular basis.	
File relevant documentation and correspondence in the documentation file of student's OSR.	

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APPENDIX G

Administrative Checklist for Implementation of Companion Animal into a School Environment

Task	Date completed
Advise parent/guardian making the request that the Protestant Separate School Board of the Town of Penetanguishene has a procedure to follow before a decision is made.	
Provide parents/guardians with the form Request for Companion Animal Involvement with a Student (Forms Policy D – 16 F Appendix E), and Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Companion Animal in the School (Forms Policy D – 16 F Appendix B)	
Inform The Supervisory Officer and Principal of Special Education of the request.	
Convene a case conference with the following in attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• parents/guardians and/or student over the age of 18• classroom teachers(s)• SERT• Special Education Consultant• representative from the animal training centre• educational assistant(s) who work with the student• Proof of municipal license, if applicable.	
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">• copy of recommendation for service companion animal• copy of animal's registration with a recognized training centre• copy of current, official vaccination certificate for the animal• proof the animal is registered in Canada• documentation from medical professionals.• copy of training certification of parents/guardians	
Inform school staff that a request has been made and receive their input.	
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Meet with the parents/guardians to inform them of the information you have received, and to advise of your recommendation to the Supervisory Officer and the Principal of Special Education.	
Advise the Supervisory Officer 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 animal'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.	