



**POLICY:**  
**SUBJECT:**

**JJ**  
**CERTIFIED SERVICE**  
**ANIMALS**

**APPROVAL DATE:**  
**REVISION DATE:**  
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## 1. GENERAL

- 1.1 The Winnipeg School Division supports the use of a certified service animal in schools requested by a parent/guardian or employee as long as the appropriate planning and preparation have taken place.
- 1.2 A certified service animal is not a pet. A certified service animal is a recognized working animal that has been trained to assist children and adults who have a physical or developmental disability with their daily living activities which include tasks, but are not limit to, providing balance and stability, retrieving items and pulling wheelchairs. There are strict guidelines that apply to their access, handling, and interaction.
- 1.3 Service animals must wear a distinctive harness/saddlebag or vest and should be under control at all times. The animal should be harnessed, leashed or tethered unless these devices interfere with the work or task that they perform, or if the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In those instances, the individual relying on the animal must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal or other means.
- 1.4 This policy is developed and consistent with the following legislation:
- i. **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) 15(1)** Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.
  - ii. **The Public Schools Act 41(1), (a.1)** provide, as may be directed or prescribed by the minister, appropriate educational programming for every
    - (i) pupil enrolled as provided for in section 58.4, and
    - (ii) resident person who has the right to attend school as provided in section 259; and

**Clause 41(1.1)** The minister may make regulations respecting appropriate educational programming to be provided by school boards under clause (1)(a.1), including, but not limited to, establishing

    - (a) programming standards respecting resources and other support services to be provided by school boards;
    - (b) a dispute resolution process to be followed if there is a disagreement about the appropriateness of the educational programming being provided to a pupil by the school board.



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iii. ***Appropriate Educational Programming***

**Clause 2(2)** A school board must ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, appropriate educational programming is available to a pupil in a regular class of their peers at:

- (a) the school whose catchment area includes their residence; or
- (b) another school that provides the program, as designated by the board, that the pupil is to be enrolled in, if the school described in clause (a) does not provide that program.

**Clause 3** A school board must ensure that school-related activities such as assemblies, sports days and field trips reasonably accommodate the needs of all students.

**Clause 5(1)** A principal must ensure that an individual education plan is prepared for a pupil who has requirements identified under clause 4(5)(b). The plan must identify:

- (a) how the pupil's requirements for meeting or approximating the expected learning outcomes are to be addressed, where it is reasonable to expect the pupil to meet or approximate those outcomes; or
- (b) where it is not reasonable to expect the pupil to meet or approximate the expected learning outcomes,
  - (i) the learning outcomes the pupil can reasonably be expected to meet, and
  - (ii) how the pupil's requirements for meeting those learning outcomes are to be addressed.

**Clause 5(2)** The principal must ensure that a pupil's individual education plan (a) is prepared with the assistance of the pupil's teacher and other in-school personnel, as directed by the principal;

- (b) takes into account a pupil's behavioural or health care needs, if any;
- (c) is consistent with provincial protocols respecting a pupil's transition to and from school; and
- (d) is updated annually or sooner if required by a change in a pupil's behaviour or needs.

**Clause 7(2)** A school board's obligation to provide educational programming under clause (1)(a) does not limit or restrict it from taking reasonable steps to address any significant risks to safety which a pupil may present to themselves, or to others.



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iv. ***The Human Rights Code (Manitoba) 9(2)*** Discrimination is prohibited for any individual with the characteristic of

(l) physical or mental disability or related characteristics or circumstances, including reliance on a service animal, a wheelchair, or any other remedial appliance or device;

v. ***The Service Animals Protection Act (Manitoba) 1(a)***In this Act, "service animal" means an animal

(a) trained to be used by a person with a disability for reasons relating to their disability;

## 2. DEFINITIONS

**Service animals** are recognized working animals that have been trained to assist children and adults who have a physical, developmental or psychiatric disability with their daily living activities. There are strict guidelines that apply to their access, handling, and interaction. The use of service animals is an intervention strategy that is recognized as an aid to the learning and social/emotional/behavioural needs of students with special needs.

The term "service animals" includes animals that assist those with a physical disability and include pulling, bracing, retrieving, and hearing dogs. Service animals may also be trained to prevent children from leaving the classroom unsupervised and entering unsafe conditions. Service animals may also assist in interrupting repetitive or injurious behaviours and guiding the child from stressful situations.

**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.

**Psychiatric Service Dogs (PSD)** is a dog that is individually trained for individuals with an emotional or psychiatric disability so severe that it substantially limits their ability to perform at least one major life task.

The Human Rights Code does not cover animals whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support. Animals in the school for reasons other than those listed under Service Animal are covered under Policy: ING Animals in the School.

Companion Animals is a newly emerging support to assist the learning behaviour of some students. These animals may be present to assist a child in feeling comfortable or less anxious. These are not service animals.



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Therapy Animals are trained to provide affection and comfort to people in hospitals, retirement homes, and schools. Therapy animals should have a trained handler and be under the direction of an adult who is authorized to be in the setting. These are not service animals.

### **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **A. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities**

- i. To initiate the process of having a service animal assist a student in school, speak with the Principal. The Principal will provide a copy of *Exhibit A: Information for Parents Requesting a Service Animal in a School* to parents and *Exhibit B: Certified Service Animal in the School, Parent/Guardian Request Form*.
- ii. Make the request in writing using *Exhibit B: Certified Service Animal in the School Parent/Guardian Request Form*.
- iii. Provide a letter from a relevant approved health care professional i.e. physician, psychiatrist or psychologist, confirming the student's diagnosis as well as a recommendation for a service animal.
- iv. Provide a letter from an accredited training program [i.e. membership in Assistance Dogs International (ADI) or the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF)], stating that a service animal has been placed with the child and provide a Certificate of Training for the animal identifying the services that it has been trained to perform.
- v. Provide the school with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, a municipal license, if required, and confirmation the service animal is in good health.
- vi. Assume financial responsibility relating to the use and care of the service animal.



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## **B. Principal Responsibilities**

- i. Consult with the Director of Student Services prior to planning the school entry process.
- ii. Upon receipt of Exhibit B: *Certified Service Animal in the School, Parent/Guardian Request Form* inform all school staff members (i.e. teaching staff, educational support staff, secretarial staff, custodial staff, etc.) of the request to have a service animal in the school. Their input and information will assist the Principal in the school entry process.
- iii. Schedule and chair a meeting with the parents/guardians, a representative from the animal training facility and the student support team which may include the classroom teacher(s), the resource teacher, the Director of Student Support Services, Clinical Support Services, and the support staff who work with the student. The purpose of the meeting is to review the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) description of strengths, challenges, behaviours, mental health needs, and required accommodations including the type of service the service animal will provide. The services provided by the service animal should be, or become, part of the goals of the IEP.
- iv. Discussions will include other relevant information such as:
  - health and safety considerations (including severe allergies and staff or students with asthma),
  - the potential impact of the involvement of the service animal on the school community,
  - animal care requirements,
  - handling routines and responsibilities,
  - guidelines for staff and students, other student issues,
  - transportation to and from school,
  - the role of and communication with parents,
  - designation of a staff who will be the handler and an alternate in the school.
- v. If a decision to approve the request is made, attention to awareness, consistency, routines, communication, staff training, school assemblies, and community notification are required.

An information session for interested school community members may be held to inform them, and to receive feedback or relevant information. The Principal may invite the parents/guardians of the student requiring the service animal to participate in the information session.



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Prior to any information session, *Exhibit C: Sample Letter to School Community and Exhibit D: Sample Letter to Families with Children in the Classroom/on the School Bus* should be shared with parents/guardians of the student requiring the use of a service animal.

- vi. School division administration may inform relevant employee groups and/or the Workplace Safety & Health Committee that a service animal will be in the school.
- vii. Contact the Transportation Department regarding transportation. A personalized transportation plan should be developed for the IEP.
- viii. Place signs on entrance doors to inform school visitors of the presence of a service animal.
- iv. Review the school Emergency Response Plan. Notify the local fire department of the existence of a service animal.
- v. Arrange for training of staff by the training facility.
- vi. Arrange for demonstrations from the training facility and/or parents on the rules of conduct around service animals.
- vii. Monitor the entry of the service animal regularly and review on an annual basis.

### **C. Employees**

Staff who require certified service animals must meet the requirements as outlined in the policy and provide the necessary documentation to the Human Resources Department.

#### Exhibits:

- A. Information for Parents Requesting a Service Animal in the School
- B. Request for Service Animal in a School
- C. Sample Letter to School Community
- D. Sample Letter to Families with Children in the Class (and on the School Bus)