

Administrative Procedure 325 SERVICE AND EDUCATION ASSISTANCE (THERAPY) DOGS/ANIMALS IN SCHOOL

East Central Catholic School Division supports the use of Service Dogs as an intervention strategy recognized as an aid to children with diverse needs.

Service dogs must be certified and registered in Alberta. To be a qualified service dog under the [Service Dogs Act](#), the dog must be trained through an Assistance Dogs International ([ADI](#)) accredited school. The Service Dog Act website (through Alberta Human Services -Service Alberta) website outlines the specific required information. All accredited schools are listed on the ADI website. The Special Skills Dog (SSD) or National Service Dogs (NSD) will have a distinctive harness/saddlebag or vest and will always be on a leash. Some technical skills for a service dog can be, but not limited to: operating light switches, opening and closing doors and drawers, retrieving items from floor, pulling wheelchairs, etc. Service dogs may also provide services to students diagnosed with disabilities such as physical disabilities, blind or low vision, deaf/hearing impaired, autism spectrum disorder, or a seizure disorder.

Definitions

Service Dog - “a dog trained as a guide for a disabled person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations.” (*Service Dogs Act* of Alberta, 2009). For the purposes of this administrative procedure, the service animal definition would include animals that have been trained by a recognized program such as Canine Vision Dog Guides, Special Skills Dog Guides, Hearing Ear Dog Guides, Seizure Response Dog Guides, and Autism Assistance Dog Guides, etc.

Education Assistance Animal (EAA) - an animal that works with its owner/handler as a team to improve a student's physical, social, emotional, or cognitive functioning. An EAA can be useful for educational and motivational effectiveness for participants. An EAA is not a “certified service dog.” Provisions that apply to protecting people with disabilities and their service animals do not apply to therapy animals and their handlers. Although therapy dogs are specially evaluated, trained, and registered for their volunteer work, they do not undergo the same extensive specialized and unique training requirements of guide dogs, hearing dogs, and service dogs. Examples of EAAs are library dogs and therapy animals.

Procedures

Service Dogs

1. Parent(s)/guardian(s) must provide a letter to the school indicating that the student has been approved for a Service Dog and include reasons, descriptions of activity, and the benefits of having a Service Dog attend school with their child.
2. Parent(s)/guardian(s) must provide a letter from a physician or psychologist confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need, including a recommendation for the use of a Service Dog.
3. Parent(s)/guardian(s) of students requesting the support and assistance of a service animal while at school shall:

- 3.1 Provide a copy of the [Service Dog Identification Card](#) issued by the Government of Alberta. All financial costs to obtain this card are the sole responsibility of the family. Parents/Guardians can apply to servicedogs@gov.ab.ca for a service dog license.
- 3.2 Provide a letter to the school indicating that the student has been approved for a Service Dog and include reasons, descriptions of activity, and the benefits of having a Service Dog attend school with their child. This letter is to be supplied to the school as early as possible in the process to allow for sufficient planning and transition of the Service Dog into the school setting.
- 3.3 Provide a letter from a physician or psychologist confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need, including a recommendation for the use of a Service Dog.
- 3.4 Assume all financial obligations regarding the use and care of the Service Dog.
- 3.5 Provide annually up-to-date proof of vaccinations, a municipal license, and confirmation that the Service Dog is in good health.
- 3.6 Work with the Principal to develop training as required for the student's learning team and bus driver(s) by the service dog organization and to educate the student body in the school and those on the bus on 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 it.
- 3.7 Work collaboratively with the Principal to develop a mutually agreed upon plan that addresses the handling of the dog (both inside and outside the school) and the service animal's personal care and physical needs.
4. When a Principal receives a written request for permission to have a service dog accompany a student to school, the Principal will:
 - 4.1 inform the Director of Teaching Quality and Staff Development of the requests.
 - 4.2 arrange a case conference involving parent(s)/guardian(s), teacher(s), support staff, Transportation Office, if appropriate and a representative of the Service Dog Organization, if appropriate to determine:
 - 4.2.1 the purpose and function of the Service Dog;
 - 4.2.2 who will accompany and handle the Service Dog outside;
 - 4.2.3 personal care and physical needs of the Service Dog;
 - 4.2.4 the safest and most environmentally sound place for the Service Dog to relieve itself;
 - 4.2.5 removal and disposal of animal waste;
 - 4.2.6 provision of a suitable container for waste that the dog handler can access;
 - 4.2.7 consideration for seasonal changes and inclement weather;

- 4.2.8 classroom considerations such as seating arrangements and changes to class placements;
 - 4.2.9 any necessary changes in routine and procedures and program changes;
 - 4.2.10 arrangements for the service dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site;
 - 4.2.11 a transition plan for the Service Dog and the student;
 - 4.2.12 a timetable for the introduction of the Service Dog to the school and classroom(s) and for the training of the student's learning team;
 - 4.2.13 rules of conduct around the Service Dog for students, staff and the public.
- 5. Trainers//handlers where necessary are to carry a minimum of two million dollars general liability insurance.
 - 6. Development of a comprehensive transition plan for the introduction of the service dog which may involve the use of social stories, visits by the Service Dog to the school/classroom including:
 - 6.1 inform school staff, school council representatives and parents/guardians of the arrival of a service dog or therapy animal to the school;
 - 6.2 send a specific letter home to the parents/guardians of students who will be in any of the classes where the service dog will possibly be present in case of allergies, anxieties or other concerns;
 - 6.3 may arrange an assembly for the student body involving representatives from the Service Dog Organization, the parent and possible the handler to explain the role of the Service Dog.
 - 6.4 Explore other concerns including interference with delivery of an educational program, possible changes to in-class routines and procedures, increased demands on staff, other children and staff who are allergic to dogs or therapy animals, recognition of children with fear of dogs and other animals, cultural sensitivities to groups that will not share space with a dog.
 - 7. The approval of the service animal into the learning environment shall be determined by the Principal based on information gathered through the processes above, as well as a review of submitted documentation pertaining to the:
 - 7.1 student's educational needs;
 - 7.2 fulfillment of family responsibilities;
 - 7.3 fulfillment of school and Division responsibilities to all stakeholders, including liability; and eligibility for transportation, which is determined by the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Blind Person's Rights Act* establishing the right for the service animal to be allowed to accompany the student on the bus.

8. The Principal may impose some restrictions on the service animal for safety reasons. The service animal may be excluded or have limited access to certain areas of the school facilities or certain programs for safety reasons. Areas or programs which may be considered off-limits for service animals include but are not limited to laboratories, mechanical closets, custodial closets, food preparation areas, areas where protective clothing is required, areas that have exposed sharp metal cuttings or other sharp objects, areas with high levels of dust, and areas where there is moving machinery
9. Staff, students/parents/guardians of a student with medical issues that are impacted by Service Dogs (such as respiratory diseases) should contact the Principal if they have a concern about exposure to a service dog. The staff member, student/parents of the student will be asked to provide medical documentation that identifies the disability and the need for an accommodation. The Principal, in consultation with the Director of Teaching Quality and Staff Development, will facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the conflicting needs/accommodations of all persons involved.
10. Any student/parent/guardian of a student with a Service Dog or staff or parent/guardian of a student who is aggrieved by the Principal's decision may appeal that decision to the Superintendent. That appeal must be in writing and provide detailed information regarding the basis of the appeal.

Educational Assistance Animals (EAA)

11. Anyone wishing to use an EAA in a school shall complete a Request for an Educational Assistance Animal and submit it to the principal. Additionally, those wishing to use an EAA to support children's programs shall:
 - 11.1 provide documentation that the EAA is a certified therapy animal;
 - 11.2 provide up-to-date proof of vaccinations adequate insurance and ensure the EAA is in good health;
 - 11.3 provides for the responsibility of care of the EAA, including the need for "bio-breaks," disposal of waste, and provision of food and water;
 - 11.4 provide the school with signage (generally provided by the EAA organization) alerting visitors/emergency service providers to the EAA's presence;
 - 11.5 indicates who will accompany and handle the EAA both inside and outside the school and what arrangements have been made with regard to alternate handlers when necessary;
 - 11.6 pay for any financial implications regarding the training, use and care of the EAA; and
 - 11.7 ensure the EAA is appropriately leashed, caged or harnessed while on school property.
12. When a Principal receives a written request for permission to have an EAA brought to the school, the Principal shall:

- 12.1 arrange a meeting involving staff to discuss:
- 12.1.1 notification and involvement of school staff;
 - 12.1.2 the purpose and function of the EAA in relation to successful learning and/or safety for the student;
 - 12.1.3 clarification of all responsibilities of the trainer/handler with the school and Division and
 - 12.1.4 other concerns include interference with the delivery of an education program; possible changes in class routines and procedures, increased demands on staff, other children and staff who are allergic to the EAA, recognition of children with fear of EAAs, and cultural sensitivities to groups that will not share space with an animal.
 - 12.1.5 the potential arrival of an EAA to the school;
 - 12.1.6 Send a specific letter home to the parents/guardians of students in any of the classes where the service dog may be present in case of allergies, anxieties, or other concerns. Should a conflict arise, priority will be given to the school community's health and safety, and the EAA shall be excluded from that area.
13. The Principal may impose some restrictions on the EAA for safety reasons. The EAA may be excluded or have limited access to certain areas of school facilities or certain programs for safety reasons. Areas or programs that may be considered off limits for EAAs include but are not limited to laboratories, mechanical closets, custodial closets, food preparation areas, areas where protective clothing is required, areas that have exposed sharp metal cuttings or other sharp objects, areas with high levels of dust and areas where there is moving machinery.
14. Trainers/handlers, where necessary, must carry a minimum of two million dollar general liability insurance. Proof of insurance is required.
15. Staff, students, or parents/guardians of a student with medical issues impacted by animals (such as respiratory diseases) are to contact the Principal if they are concerned about exposure to an EAA.
16. The staff member, student, or parents/guardians of a student shall be asked to provide medical documentation identifying the disability and the need for an accommodation.
17. The Principal shall facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the conflicting needs/accommodations of all persons involved.

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Reference:

Section 3,11,31,32,33,52,53,196,197,204,222,225 Education Act
[Alberta Service Dogs Act](#)
[Alberta Service Dog Qualification Regulation](#)

[Alberta Blind Persons' Rights Act](#)
[Alberta Human Rights Act](#)
Fort McMurray Public Schools
Elk Island Public Schools
STAR Catholic Schools