



Turtle River School Division - Administrative Procedure

Section D – Student Services

Use of Service Animals

Turtle River School Division recognizes that in certain cases, appropriate educational programming may include the services of a certified service animal. A certified service animal refers to an animal that has been trained to provide assistance to a person relating to that person’s disability.

Integrating the use of a certified service animal in the programming for a student is outlined in the procedures and guidelines of this policy. The successful use of service animals in schools requires extensive preparation by multiple individuals prior to the implementation.

Effective communication is critical for educating the school community and for fostering understanding among all individuals. Sample letters are included in order to guide communication with parents. These letters will inform parents and students about the presence of animals in case of allergies or extreme phobias.

No individual student’s rights and needs take precedence over any other individual student’s rights and needs. In providing for appropriate educational programming for students who require certified service animals, other students’ legal rights to an education are given equal consideration.

Service Animal Guidelines

The Turtle River School Division understands the benefits associated with the use of specifically trained and certified service animals to assist students with disabilities and/or special needs.

The presence of a service animal requires appropriate planning and preparation before implementing the program. Schools will follow specific procedures schools in order to ensure the successful usage of service animals within their premises.

- If an incident occurs between a service animal and a staff member/student, the principal will notify and consult with the superintendent immediately.
- The principal will investigate the incident, examining the antecedent and behaviour of both the service animal and affected individual(s). This investigation ***must be completed in a prompt and timely manner*** in order to preserve evidence, testimony, and allow for the successful remediation.

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- The principal will document the investigation and a formal assessment and consultation with the certified service animal trainer will occur prior to the service animal returning to the school.
- Appropriate precautions will be put in place to ensure the safety of both the animal and students upon its return.

Service Animal Procedures

Once the school principal has been notified of the anticipated integration of a service animal into the school, the following procedures are to be implemented by Turtle River School Division prior to the admittance of the service animal to the school. It is important that all responsibilities of each party identified in the procedures are strictly adhered to as indicated. These procedures will be accelerated should a child who uses a certified service animal comes to a school in the middle of the school year.

Responsibilities of the Parents/Guardians:

It is expected that parents/guardians will advise the division, as soon as possible, that a service animal is required. This will provide the maximum amount of time for the division and school to prepare for the integration of this request.

Parents/guardians will:

- provide a letter to the school principal from their medical doctor recommending the use of a certified service animal prior to commencing the process of appropriate educational programming. Sufficient time will be required for the division and school to support the planning of this student’s program.
- provide a letter to the principal outlining what they see as being the benefits of having the service animal attend school with their child.
- provide a certificate of training for the animal from the service animal organization. Any financial costs to obtain this certificate are the sole responsibility of the family.
- ensure that service animals certified by an organization inside or outside of Canada have their certification standards verified by the Office of the Fire Commissioner.
- verify the student handler’s ability to control the animal in a school setting through the Office of the Fire Commissioner.
- provide proof that the animal has its yearly vaccinations, required licenses, and is in good health.

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- pay for any financial implications regarding the use and care of the service animal.
- arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the service animal, including the procedure for attending to the animal's physical needs, such as washroom breaks. Designate an animal handler for this purpose.

Responsibilities of the Principal

The school principal will:

- facilitate with parents any arrangements and communication of the expected timeline for the introduction of the service animal to the school.
- consult with the superintendent/student services coordinator before arranging a student planning/team meeting.
- ensure that the use of a service animal is consistent with the needs or recommendations outlined in the IEP process.
- ensure that a team meeting is arranged to plan and prepare for the implementation of the service animal in the school, addressing various components discussed and planned with the resource teacher.
- consult with the student services coordinator to resolve any specific concerns or issues raised regarding the presence of a service animal.
- contact the transportation supervisor regarding transportation requirements.
- inform the transportation supervisor of the presence of the animal on the bus.
- ensure that the driver and transportation educational assistant (if applicable) will receive appropriate training (template attached).
- ensure that the students, school staff members, school community, and the superintendent are informed of the expected presence of the certified service animal in the school.
- retain all letters in the students cumulative pupil file for a minimum of one year.
 - Send a letter home for all students and provide to all staff members informing the school community as to the arrival of a service animal at the school (template attached).
 - Inform all staff members, including teachers, educational assistants, bus drivers, custodians, volunteers, parent council, union representatives, and health and safety representatives of the presence of service animals.
 - Send a letter home to the students in classes where the animal will be present in case of students' allergies or extreme phobias.
 - A sample letter is included.

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- A letter is to be sent to parents/guardians of all children who travel on the same bus (template attached).
- arrange for a demonstration from the National Service Animal organization for the student body, staff, and the community, as required, to provide education and awareness of Service Animals in Schools.
- arrange an assembly or class visit(s) to explain the role of the service animal and any rules regarding the animal’s interactions with other students.
- ensure that a sign is posted on every door of entry of the school building alerting visitors/emergency service providers to the presence of a working service animal.
- revise emergency procedures as required to include the service animal, such as evacuations, fire, tornado, and lockdown procedures.
- notify both the local law enforcement (RCMP) and Fire Department of the presence of the service animal.
- ensure that the service animal’s organization provides training to the student’s school team (principal, teachers, educational assistants, and transportation personnel) prior to the animal beginning work in the school. Training will be provided at the division’s expense.
- submit a jointly agreed upon implementation plan to the superintendent, on behalf of the school and parents, as soon as possible before the start of the service animal in the school setting.

Resource Teacher’s Role and Responsibilities

The Resource Teacher will

1. set up a team meeting involving the parents/guardians, principal, teacher(s), educational assistant(s), a representative from the service animal organization, the student when appropriate, and the superintendent/student services coordinator to discuss the following:
 - Ensure classroom staff members are informed and involved.
 - Discuss the purpose/function of the service animal.
 - Determine an alternate service animal handler for instances when the handler is absent.
 - Clarifying with the school team who is responsible for the care of the animal – an adult from the family (or designate) must be available to take the service animal for a “break” during the day, at minimum, once per day, preferably “midday,”
 - Establish where the safest and most environmentally sound place is for the animal to relieve itself and the cleaning expectations involved.

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- Discuss considerations for different seasons (i.e., summer, winter, etc.) regarding the care of the animal.
 - Discuss procedures for days of inclement weather.
 - Develop plans for when the student is absent or ill.
 - Develop a plan to ensure the animal is offered water at mid-day and establish procedures for water provision and removal.
 - Determine waste removal and disposal procedures.
 - Examine the physical arrangements in the classroom(s)
 - Discuss transportation arrangements, i.e., all pertinent bus procedures.
 - Discuss other issues including: interference with delivery of the academic program, possible changes to in-class routines and procedures, increased demands on resource staff and teachers, provision of an assistant(s) to assist the student with the animal, and consideration for other children who are allergic to animals or are fearful of them.
 - Review cultural sensitivity for groups who will not share space with an animal.
 - Determine a date for a follow-up meeting to review animal handling issues/concerns.
 - Determine a process for answering questions as they arise.
2. place a copy of the parent letter and the medical diagnosis in the pupil file.
 3. develop a transition plan for the service animal and the student that outlines:
 - any necessary changes to routines and procedures.
 - arrangements for the service animal to familiarize itself with the school building without students present.
 - a clear timetable for the implementation of the service animal to the school, classroom, and for the training of the student's school team.
 - preparation for staff and students with allergies, fears, or cultural sensitivities.
 4. incorporate the use of a service animal into the IEP process.
 5. develop a transition plan for the animal which may include the use of social stories, visits of the animal to the school/classroom, etc.
 6. review the performance of the service animal regularly during the phase-in process and after four weeks of full integration into the student's school.
 7. establish an appropriate emergency exit plan and alert the fire department to the presence of the animal in the school.

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Transportation Supervisor's Responsibilities

The transportation supervisor will:

1. inform the driver and, where applicable, the transportation EA of the presence of a certified service animal on the bus.
2. ensure that appropriate training will be provided for the bus driver and the transportation EA.
3. develop and implement a protocol for handling the certified service animal on the bus, in conjunction with the animal trainer/handler including:
 - i. location of animal during transport (e.g., under the seat or in the seat compartment) to ensure it does not block the aisles.
 - ii. establishing procedures for ensuring the safety of the animal and others, such as the use of an appropriate cage, if necessary.
 - iii. providing training to other students on the bus regarding the role and function of the service animal and procedures for handling the animal while on the bus.
 - iv. developing and practicing a bus evacuation plan for the animal.
4. ensure that there is sufficient documentation and procedural instruction available on the bus for spare bus drivers to understand the procedures for transporting the animal.
5. in conjunction with the principal, ensure that appropriate communication with parents occurs through the distribution of a letter, as per the sample provided, to all parents with students who ride on the bus that will be used to transport the service animal.

Resources / References

Please refer to the attached resources/references or revised versions of these documents below for more information regarding suggested practices and legislation of service animal use in schools.

- [Legislation in Manitoba – The Service Animals Protection Act](#)
- [The Manitoba Human Rights Code](#)
- [The Manitoba Human Rights Commission](#)

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School Letterhead School Logo

S A M P L E CLASSROOM LETTER

(Date)

Dear Parents/Guardians:

This letter is to inform you that (one/two) of our students have/has received a service animal from National Service Animals of Canada. “Name of Service Animal” is a (description of animal, i.e. three year old Golden Retriever), that will be accompanying the student(s) to and from school and working with the (one/two) students throughout the school day.

_____, Program Director and Co-Founder of National Service Animals of Canada from (Cambridge, Ontario), was at (your school name) on (date) to train staff members in how to handle and work with “Name of Service Animal” and the student(s). “Name of Service Animal” wears a purple “working” vest when (he/she) is working with the student(s) and (his/her) job is to increase independence and provide safety for the student(s).

We will be having an assembly to introduce “Name of Service Animal” to the rest of the students in our school and to educate them so they respond appropriately when they see “Name of Service Animal” (i.e. do not pet him when they see that he is wearing his purple vest because he is working).

We have checked all our students’ medical forms and do not have any students in our school who have indicated a severe allergy to (animal). _____, of National Service Animals of Canada, has instructed us to tell students and parents that if they feel they may be allergic to (animal), then do not touch the (animal).

We are excited to be able to have “Name of Service Animal” as an additional resource for our student(s) and are looking forward to having him as part of our (your school name) Community.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at _____. Brochures regarding the National Service Animals Program are available at our office.

Sincerely,

Principal

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S A M P L E TRANSPORTATION LETTER

(Date)

Dear Parents/Guardians:

This letter is to inform you that (one/two) of our bus students has/have received a service animal from National Service Animals of Canada. “Name of Service Animal” is a (description of animal, i.e. Golden Retriever), that will be accompanying the student(s) to and from school and working with the student(s) through the school day.

_____, Program Director and Co-Founder of National Service Animals of Canada from Cambridge, Ontario, was at (name of school) on (date) to train staff members in how to handle and work with “Name of Service Animal” and the student(s). “Name of Service Animal” wears a purple “working” vest when (he/she) is working with the student(s) and (his/her) job is to increase independence and provide safety for the student(s).

“Name of Service Animal” will be riding to and from school on our school bus beginning (date) and we would like to check with all our bus students’ parents to see if there are any allergies that we need to be aware of so that seating can be adjusted. _____, of National Service Animals of Canada, has instructed us to tell students and parents that if they feel they may be allergic to (animals), then do not touch the (animal). Please contact me if you believe your child to be allergic to (animals).

We are pleased to be able to have “Name of Service Animal” as an additional resource for our student(s). If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at (telephone number). Brochures regarding the National Service Animal Program are available at our office.

Sincerely,

_____,
Supervisor of Transportation

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