

Procedure Title	Accessibility Standards for Customer Service – Use of Service Animals by the General Public		
Date of Issue	December 21, 2011	Related Policy	BP 1411-D
Revision Dates	October 2, 2014; July 6, 2016	Related Forms	
Review Date		Originator	Administrative Council
References			
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA); Accessibility Standards for Customer Service, Ontario Regulation 429/07; Ontario Human Rights Code; Annual Accessibility Plan; Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56; AP 6809-D “Service Dog/Companion Dog (Use of in Schools)”; Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7; Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 20; Dog Owners' Liability Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. D.16			

Procedure:

1.0 RATIONALE

Bluewater District School Board will welcome all members of the school and broader community to our facilities by committing our staff and volunteers to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of people with disabilities, such service to incorporate measures that include but are not limited to the use of service animals.

2.0 DEFINITION(S)

Service Animal An animal that is being used because of a person’s disability and this is either readily apparent or is supported by a letter from a physician or nurse. Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who have vision loss, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety. The customer service standard’s provisions also apply to animals providing other services to people with disabilities.

Readily Apparent It is ‘readily apparent’ that an animal is a service animal when it is obvious by its appearance or by what it is doing. For example, it may be readily apparent that an animal is a service animal if it is wearing a harness, saddle bags, a sign that identifies it as a service animal or has a certificate or identification card from a service animal training school or an identification card from the Attorney General of Ontario. It may also be readily apparent if a person is using an animal to assist him/her in doing things, such as opening doors or retrieving items.

3.0 PROCEDURE

3.1 Responsibility

- i. Area Superintendents, Principals and Departmental Managers will ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public have received Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) training in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

3.2 Access to Board Premises

- i. Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a service animal will be welcomed on board and/or school premises with his or her service animal and will be accompanied by the service animal while on the premises. Access will be in accordance with normal security procedures.
- ii. This requirement applies only to those areas of the premises where the public or third parties customarily have access and does not include places or areas of the school or board offices where the public does not have access.
- iii. This procedure deals solely with the individual's right to be accompanied by a service animal. Access to classrooms for service animals used by students and staff is covered under AP 6809-D "Service Dog/Companion Dog (Use of in Schools)".

3.3 Exclusion of Service Animal

- i. A service animal can only be excluded from access to the premises where this is required by another law. Examples include the Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7 and the Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 20. The former Act prohibits service animals in places where food is prepared, processed, or handled (e.g. kitchen of school cafeteria or culinary arts classroom) although service animals are permitted where food is served and sold (e.g. school cafeteria or lunchroom).
- ii. Where there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of a service animal, consideration must be given to options available prior to exclusion of a service animal. An example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the service animal. It is the board's expectation that the situation be fully analyzed and all measures to eliminate risk be considered, e.g. creating distance between the two individuals concerned, making reasonable alternatives to schedules, etc.
- iii. A service animal can be excluded if it is a breed that is prohibited by law. An example would be the Ontario Dog Owners' Liability Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. D.16 which places restrictions on pit bull terriers.

3.4 Alternative Measures if Service Animal must be Excluded

- i. In the rare instance where a service animal must be excluded, the board must make every effort to put alternative arrangements in place to provide the services required by the person with a disability. This could involve leaving the animal in a secure area where it is permitted by law and discussion with the person how best to serve them, e.g., a person with a vision disability might need someone (a member of staff or volunteer) to guide them.

3.5 When it is Necessary to Confirm an Animal is a Service Animal

- i. Where an animal is not a trained guide dog and it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, the school or board staff member may ask the person using the service animal for documentation from a regulated health professional confirming that the animal is needed for reasons related to their disability. The documentation does need to identify the disability, why the animal is needed or how it is used.
- ii. Where the person using the service animal regularly attends at the school or board facility, the principal / departmental manager may request to keep a copy of the letter on file but only as long as required by the circumstances. Alternatively, the person using the service animal may be asked to bring a letter (as noted in Section 3.5 (i)) with them on occasions when they visit the premises. The principal/departmental manager shall preserve the confidentiality of the letter and the information contained in the letter, and shall not use or disclose the letter or information except as provided for in the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56, or as otherwise required by law.