

Procedure Title	Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog (Use of in Schools)		
Date of Issue	November 26, 2008	Related Policy	BP 6802-D
Revision Dates	November 14, 2012; October 5, 2016; August 22, 2018; August 21, 2019	Related Forms	AF 6807; AF 6808; AF 6809
Review Date		Originator	Administrative Council
References			
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005; Ontario Regulation 429/07; Human Rights Code; Blind Persons' Rights Act; Policy/Program Memorandum No. 161 'Supporting Children and Students with Prevalent Medical Conditions (Anaphylaxis, Asthma, Diabetes, and/or Epilepsy) in Schools'			

1.0 RATIONALE

- 1.1 The use of a guide dog or a service animal is one accommodation for a student with special education needs that can assist with the safety, independence and learning needs of the student. A companion dog is an animal, other than a guide dog or service animal, which may provide emotional comfort and/or other types of assistance to a student.
- 1.2 This procedure provides direction to school administrators regarding the admittance and implementation of guide dogs, service animals and/or companion dogs into the school environment.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

2.1 Guide Dog

A guide dog is a dog that has successfully completed a training program to become a qualified guide for a blind person at a facility prescribed by the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*. An identification card issued by the Ontario Government may be requested should any question arise as to whether the dog is a qualified guide dog. Guide dogs are permitted to accompany a blind person in all public places, including schools and transportation.

2.2 Service Animal

An animal is a service animal for a student with a disability if:

- (a) the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the student for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
- (b) the student or the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) provide documentation from a regulated health professional prescribed by *Ontario Regulation 191/11, Integrated Accessibility Standards*, confirming that the student requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

Service animals are permitted to accompany a student with a disability in all public places, including schools and transportation, unless the animal is otherwise excluded by law from the premises. In such cases, the school will work with the student to provide an alternative form of accommodation. A service animal includes a service dog, as defined by the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, for the purposes of a Food Premises.

2.3 Companion Dog

A companion dog is an animal, other than a service animal or guide dog, which may provide emotional comfort and/or other types of assistance to a student. When a school is approached by a parent/guardian requesting the use of a companion dog by a student, the school must determine if the request is for a service animal, guide dog or companion dog. Requests for a companion dog to participate in the school environment will be assessed on a case by case basis, and may be denied in certain circumstances.

3.0 GUIDE DOGS AND SERVICE ANIMALS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- 3.1 To initiate the process of having a guide dog or service animal in the school environment, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student requiring the guide dog or service animal must inform the principal of the student's school of the student's requirement.
- 3.2 In the case of a guide dog, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may be asked to provide an identification card confirming that the guide dog has been specially trained. In the case of a service animal, the parent or guardian may be asked to provide confirmation from a regulated health professional that the student requires the use of the service animal.
- 3.3 The parent(s)/guardian(s) must also complete administrative form AF 6808 "Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog Request for Involvement with a Student", and will receive a copy of administrative procedure AP 6809-D "Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog (Use of in Schools)", including Appendix A "Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog in the School".
- 3.4 The parent(s)/guardian(s) may also be asked to provide proof that the service animal is vaccinated, properly licensed by the city or municipality, and that the service animal is in good health and temperament to be in the school environment.
- 3.5 It is the responsibility of the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that a guide dog/service animal behaves properly at all times and does not pose a risk of danger to anyone in the school or a source of disruption due to the behavior of the animal. The student's parent(s)/guardian(s) remain accountable for the behavior of the animal while at school including liability for any injuries caused by the animal. Parent(s)/guardian(s) of students who require a service animal are therefore urged to ensure that the service animal has completed appropriate training and to provide the school with documentation to this effect.
- 3.6 While the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) is encouraged to establish a strong working relationship between the student and guide dog or service animal, the student must serve as the dog's handler. The student's parent(s)/guardian(s) will guide and encourage their child to reach their full potential for self-management and self-advocacy.
- 3.7 Upon being notified that a student requires the use of a service animal, the principal will consult with the superintendent responsible for special education and will schedule a team meeting with the parent(s)/guardian(s), classroom teacher(s), educational assistant(s), learning resource teacher, system special education lead teacher (SSELT), superintendent responsible for special education, and other support staff as deemed appropriate by the principal.
- 3.8 At the team meeting, the following will be discussed:
- a) the type of support that the service animal will provide;
 - b) relevant information such as safety considerations (e.g. severe allergies, staff or students with asthma, fear of animals, cultural sensitivities, etc.);
 - c) the potential impact of the involvement of the service animal on the school community;
 - d) service animal care requirements;
 - e) handling routines and responsibilities;
 - f) guidelines for staff and students;
 - g) other student issues;

- h) the development of a timeline for implementation;
- i) transportation to school;
- j) the role of and communication with the parent(s)/ guardian(s);
- k) arrangements for SSELT and other appropriate staff to observe the student and service animal in home/community; and
- l) the resources available to the school.

Form AF 6809 "Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog Management Plan for Care" will be completed.

- 3.9 All decisions regarding the admittance of a service animal to a particular school will be made on a case by case basis taking into account all of the circumstances of the particular situation, including the individual needs of the student who would be assisted by the service animal, and the needs of any other person at the school, including staff and students. Where necessary, the rights and needs of one person will be balanced against the rights and needs of others. Where the presence of a service animal would pose a risk to someone else in the school because of a disability, an accommodation process will be undertaken with the involvement of all stakeholders in order to find a resolution.
- 3.10 The principal will consult with the superintendent responsible for special education prior to approval and planning the implementation process.
- 3.11 The principal will copy and file relevant documentation and correspondence in the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR). Additionally, copies of the documentation must be forwarded to the superintendent responsible for special education.
- 3.12 The principal will advise the parent that all costs related to the provision of the guide dog or service animal are the financial responsibility of the parent.
- 3.13 The School Council (SC) advises the principal on matters pertaining to the school community. An information session for the SC and other interested community members will be held to inform them, and to receive feedback or relevant information. The principal will invite the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student needing the guide dog or service animal to participate in the information session.
- 3.14 All school staff members, teaching and non-teaching must be informed early in the process of the request to have a guide dog or service animal in the school. Their input and information will assist the principal in the implementation process.
- 3.15 Students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) in the school community must be informed of the request for a guide dog or service animal. Depending on the school culture, school size and age of students, the principal will determine the most appropriate format for sharing information. Formats for consideration may include a newsletter, website article, or School Messenger Communicate message.
- 3.16 Signs must be placed on the entrance doors of the school to inform students, staff, school community and visitors of the guide dog or service animal's presence.
- 3.17 An appropriate fire and emergency exit plan must be developed for the guide dog or service animal.
- 3.18 The principal will complete AF 6807 "Use of a Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog – Principal Checklist".
- 3.19 Guide dog/service animal will be placed under 'Accommodation' on the Individual Education plan (IEP).

4.0 COMPANION DOGS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- 4.1 To initiate the process of having a companion dog in the school environment, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student requesting the companion dog must inform the principal of the student's school that the student requests the use of a companion dog and the rationale for the request.

- 4.2 The parent(s)/guardian(s) must provide documentation to substantiate that the companion dog:
- has had its yearly vaccines;
 - is properly licensed by the city or municipality, and
 - has undergone appropriate training to become a companion dog.
- 4.3 It is the responsibility of the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that a companion dog behaves properly at all times and does not pose a risk of danger to anyone in the school or a source of disruption due to the behavior of the animal. The student's parent(s)/guardian(s) remain accountable for the behavior of the animal while at school including liability for any injuries caused by the animal.
- 4.4 While the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) is encouraged to establish a strong working relationship between the student and companion dog, the student must serve as the dog's handler.
- 4.5 The parent(s)/guardian(s) must also complete administrative form AF 6808 "Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog Request for Involvement with a Student", and will receive a copy of this procedure, including Appendix A "Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog in the School"
- 4.6 Upon being notified that a student requests the use of a companion dog, the principal will consult with the superintendent responsible for special education and will schedule a team meeting with the parent(s)/guardian(s), classroom teacher(s), educational assistant(s), learning resource teacher, system special education lead teacher (SSELT), superintendent responsible for special education, and other support staff as deemed appropriate by the principal.
- 4.7 At the team meeting, the following will be discussed:
- the type of support that the companion dog will provide;
 - relevant information such as safety considerations (e.g., severe allergies, staff or students with asthma, fear of animals, cultural sensitivities, etc.);
 - the potential impact of the involvement of the companion dog on the school community;
 - companion dog care requirements;
 - handling routines and responsibilities;
 - guidelines for staff and students;
 - other student issues;
 - the development of a timeline for implementation;
 - transportation to school;
 - the role of and communication with the parent(s)/ guardian(s);
 - arrangements for SSELT and other appropriate staff to observe the handler and companion dog in home/community; and
 - the resources available to the school.
- Form AF 6809 "Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog Management Plan for Care" will be completed.
- 4.8 All decisions regarding the admittance of a companion dog to a particular school will be made on a case by case basis taking into account all of the circumstances of the particular situation, including the individual needs of the student who would be assisted by the companion dog, and the needs of any other person at the school, including staff and students. Where necessary, the rights and needs of one person will be balanced against the rights and needs of others. In certain circumstances, the request for a companion dog may be refused.
- 4.9 The principal will consult with the superintendent responsible for special education prior to approval and planning the implementation process.
- 4.10 The principal will copy and file relevant documentation and correspondence in the student's OSR. Additionally, copies of the documentation must be forwarded to the superintendent responsible for special education.

- 4.11 The principal will advise the parent that all costs related to the provision of the companion dog are the financial responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- 4.12 The School Council (SC) advises the principal on matters pertaining to the school community. An information session for the SC and other interested community members will be held to inform them, and to receive feedback or relevant information. The principal will invite the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student requesting the companion dog to participate in the information session.
- 4.13 All school staff members, teaching and non-teaching must be informed early in the process of the request to have a companion dog in the school. Their input and information will assist the principal in the implementation process.
- 4.14 Students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) in the school community must be informed of the request for a companion dog. Depending on the school culture, school size and age of students, the principal will determine the most appropriate format for sharing information. Formats for consideration may include a newsletter, website article or School Messenger Communicate message.
- 4.15 Signs must be placed on the entrance doors of the school to inform students, staff, school community, and visitors of the companion dog's presence.
- 4.16 An appropriate fire and emergency exit plan must be developed for the companion dog.
- 4.17 The principal will complete AF 6807 "Use of a Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog – Principal Checklist".
- 4.18 Companion dog will be placed under 'Accommodation' on the IEP.

5.0 ANNUAL REVIEW AND MONITORING

- 5.1 In preparation for a new school year or a change in schools, the principal shall:
 - a) Schedule a team meeting/case conference;
 - b) Make necessary adjustments to the management plan;
 - c) Review protocol with students in the classroom/school, school-based staff, and transportation staff;
 - d) Share information with the parent community council and parents of students in school community;
 - e) Identify and address any issues with respect to the guide dog, service animal, companion dog, the student, the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), or staff; and
 - f) Request updated documentation relevant to the guide dog, service animal or companion dog.

APPENDIX A

Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Guide Dog/Service Animal/Companion Dog in the School

1. The success of the implementation of a guide dog, service animal, or companion dog 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. A guide dog is a dog that has successfully completed a training program to become a qualified guide for a blind person at a facility prescribed by the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*. An identification card issued by the Ontario Government may be requested should any question arise as to whether the dog is a qualified guide dog. Guide dogs are permitted to accompany a blind person in all public places, including schools and transportation.

An animal is a service animal for a student with a disability if:

- a) the animal can be readily identified as one that is being used by the student for reasons relating to the person's disability, as a result of visual indicators such as the vest or harness worn by the animal; or
- b) the student or the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) provide documentation from a regulated health professional prescribed by *Ontario Regulation 191/11, Integrated Accessibility Standards*, confirming that the student requires the animal for reasons relating to the disability.

A companion dog is an animal, other than a service animal or guide dog, which may provide emotional comfort and/or other types of assistance to a student. When a school is approached by a parent or guardian requesting the use of a companion dog by a student, the school must determine if the request is for a service animal, guide dog, or companion dog. A request for a companion dog to participate in the school environment will be assessed on a case by case basis and may be denied in certain circumstances.

3. The responsibility for the care and handling routines of a guide dog, service animal or companion dog remains totally with the student and the student's parent(s)/guardian(s).
4. The information you provide will help the principal to consider 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 guide dog, service animal or companion dog is properly qualified and does not exhibit aggressive or protective behaviours. The principal also needs to know if any student or member of staff has severe medical or psychological reactions to the guide dog, service animal or companion dog that may prevent or restrict the involvement of the dog at the school.
5. The well-being of the guide dog, service animal or companion dog is also very important. Its care, handling and training needs will be addressed, and your input is valuable. The principal 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 guide dog, service animal or companion dog will need to be included in the planning to be as consistent and fair to the dog as possible.
6. The school community council advises the principal on matters pertaining to the school community. It is customary to provide an information session for the council and other interested parents. It is our experience that important information shared in this way facilitates understanding and acceptance of new practices at the school. You will be asked to participate in the information session.
7. The principal will consult with the superintendent responsible for special education prior to the admittance and implementation of the guide dog, service animal or companion dog in 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 guide dog, service animal or companion dog. The goal will be to implement the plan as soon as possible.

9. Once approval and planning are in place, your responsibilities include:
 - a) transporting or walking the guide dog, service animal or companion dog to and from school, or facilitating the use of transportation,
 - b) providing the required equipment and care items,
 - c) assuming financial responsibility for training, veterinary care, and other related costs,
 - d) working co-operatively with the school staff to make this accommodation a success,
 - e) assisting the principal to communicate relevant information to the school community,
 - f) informing the principal of all relevant information that may affect the students and staff; and
 - g) as applicable, you will need to provide the principal with documentation to substantiate the following in a timely fashion:
 - i. that the service animal or companion dog has had its yearly vaccines;
 - ii. that the service animal or companion dog is properly licensed by the city or municipality; and
 - iii. that the guide dog, service animal or companion dog has undergone appropriate training.