



**Department: Programs and Services**  
**Section: Special Education**

The use of a specially trained service dog is one strategy to accommodate the special needs of some students. This administrative procedure provides specific direction to school administrators regarding the admittance and implementation of service dogs, autism service dogs, guide dogs, hearing dogs and other certified working dogs in the school environment.

## **1.0 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

- 1.1 **SERVICE DOGS:** A service dog is a type of assistance dog specially trained to help people who have disabilities or to assist with medical responses (for example, assist people with epilepsy). For the purpose of this policy and administrative procedure, service dogs include:
- 1.1.1 **GUIDE DOGS:** Guide Dogs are highly trained working animals that help provide mobility, safety and increased independence for people with vision loss.
  - 1.1.2 **HEARING DOGS:** A hearing dog is a type of assistance dog specially selected and trained to assist people who are deaf or hearing impaired by alerting their handler to important sounds, such as doorbells, smoke alarms, ringing telephones, or alarm clocks. They may also work outside of the home, alerting to such sounds as sirens, forklifts and a person calling the handler's name.
  - 1.1.3 **AUTISM SERVICE DOGS:** Autism service dogs are specially trained Labrador or Golden Retrievers, trained by National Service Dogs, that increase safety levels and alleviate bolting behaviours common in children with autism by acting as an anchor when tethered to the child. An autism service dog is a certified service dog that is recognized as a working dog and strict guidelines apply for the access, handling and interaction with these dogs.
- 1.2 **THERAPY OR COMPANION DOGS:** A therapy dog visits people in nursing homes and hospitals to bring love and companionship into their daily routine.
- 1.3 **READING DOGS:** A Reading Dog is trained by St. John's Ambulance to provide a settled companion for the child's uninterrupted, uncorrected reading.
- 1.4 **ACCREDITATION FOR SERVICE DOGS and GUIDE DOGS:** Service dogs must be certified and registered in Canada. The Special Skills Dog (SSD) or National Service Dog (NSD) will have a distinctive harness and leash and/or saddlebag and vest.

Training schools for any type of service, guide or working dog in Nova Scotia must be members of and accredited by either:

- a) The International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF): Members' purpose is to serve the visually impaired and blind people from around the world by training and providing Guide Dogs;
- b) Assistance Dogs International, Inc. (ADI): ADI is a coalition of not-for-profit organizations that train and place Assistance Dogs.

## 2.0 ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

### 2.1 SERVICE DOGS AND COMPANION/THERAPY/READING DOGS

- 2.1.1 Service dogs are in place to support students in their achievement of learning outcomes. Service dogs must graduate from a recognized training centre and have supporting documentation that defines their role. A certified service dog is a working dog and there are strict guidelines for access, handling and interaction with these dogs. A certified service dog is allowed full public access in Canada and is trained to perform the skills required to meet the needs of the student with whom it has been partnered.
- 2.1.2 Companion dogs or therapy dogs include dogs that provide comfort and friendship to students who may have emotional, self-esteem or social problems or are used for therapeutic purposes. Companion dogs are not considered to be an accommodation as they are not required to support students in their achievement of learning outcomes.

### 2.2 LEGISLATION

- 2.2.1 Nova Scotia Law (Blind Persons Act 2007) requires that a specially trained Guide Dog be allowed to accompany a blind person to all public venues and transportation carriers.
- 2.2.2 The Nova Scotia Act to Amend the Statute Law Relating to Human Rights provides a protective provision to ensure the rights of persons who have a "physical or mental disability or related characteristics or circumstances, including reliance on a dog guide or other animal assistance, a wheelchair or any other remedial appliance or device."

### 2.3 CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.3.1 When a school is approached with the request for a dog to accompany a student, the school must first determine whether the request is for a service dog or a companion dog. A request for a companion dog may be denied.
- 2.3.2 Decisions regarding the admittance procedure and implementation of service dogs into the school environment are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. All circumstances of a particular case, including the individual needs of the student being assisted by the dogs, and the needs of other students and staff will be considered. Where necessary, the rights and needs of one person may have to be balanced against the rights and needs of another.

2.3.3 Plans for entry of service dogs will be developed after extensive consultation. The Principal must consult with the Coordinator of Student Services and the Director of Programs and Services.

## 2.4 PROCEDURE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SERVICE DOGS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

2.4.1 Parents/Guardians should approach the school Principal regarding the needs of their child and the potential use of a service dog.

2.4.2 Parents/Guardians are to make a request in writing to the school (Appendix B) and will receive a copy of the information form (Appendix A) outlining the use of service dogs in AVRSB schools.

2.4.3 Parents/Guardians will provide the Principal with the following:

- a) A letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons confirming the diagnosis of exceptionality, as well as a recommendation for the use of a Certified Service Dog;
- b) A letter from National Service Dogs Training Centre or equivalent registered organization (such as Hearing Ear Dogs of Canada or the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guide Programs) stating that a Certified Service Dog has been placed with the child, and the date of formal Certified Service Dog Team Recognition;
- c) The dog's vaccination record (updates to be provided yearly, by the family at the beginning of each school year);
- d) Records of re-training and updating, if available;
- e) Any applicable municipal licensing for the dog;
- f) Information about needs, training, liability insurance, handling, etc.

2.4.4 The service dog will be denied access if:

- a) Not clean, well-groomed or has offensive odor;
- b) Urinates or defecates in inappropriate locations;
- c) Solicits attention;
- d) Vocalizes unnecessarily: barking, growling, howling, whining;
- e) Shows aggression towards people or other animals;
- f) Solicits or steals food or other items.

2.4.5 The Principal will consult with the Director of Programs and Services prior to planning the implementation process.

- 2.4.6 The Director of Programs and Services may contact the accredited training centre for the dog to discuss placement in the classroom and training and support if necessary.
- 2.4.7 The Principal will check school records to ensure that there are no students that have an anaphylactic allergy to dogs and consult the AVRSB Student Services Policies and Procedures if an allergy exists. Accommodations may need to be made with all families involved if a serious allergy exists.
- 2.4.8 The Principal will schedule a program planning team meeting with the parent(s)/guardian(s), a representative from the dog training school, the classroom teacher(s), Regional Office staff and the educational assistant(s) who work with the student. The purpose of the program planning team meeting is to review the student's program plan, if applicable, and the required accommodations including the type of service that the dog will provide. The service provided by the dog must be consistent with the needs or recommendations of the program plan.
- 2.4.9 The Principal will advise the parent that all costs related to the provision of the service dog are the financial responsibility of the parent/guardian.
- 2.4.10 Discussions will also include other information such as safety (allergies, staff or students with asthma, fear of dogs, etc.); cultural sensitivity; the potential impact of the dog on the school community; handling routines and responsibilities; guidelines for staff and students; other student issues; transportation to school; etc. A management plan for the Care of the Dog (Appendix C) will be developed.
- 2.4.11 An information and input session must be held for members of the school community to attend. Information regarding the use of service dogs in the school will be shared and the school community will be invited to provide feedback or relevant information. Information should be part of the registration package to inform new students and their parents/guardians of the presence of a service dog in the school.
- 2.4.12 All school staff members, teaching and non-teaching, must be informed early in the process of the request to have a service dog in the school and their input should be invited as part of the implementation process.
- 2.4.13 Plans for transporting the dog safely to and from school must be considered. Specifically, while service dogs are allowed to be transported on AVRSB school buses, the Principal must first confirm that no students on the bus have severe allergies, are afraid of dogs, or other issues. This would include checking with the students of other schools who also ride on the same bus. A Seating Plan Form shall be used to indicate where the service dog will be seated in the bus. As well, students on the bus shall be trained regarding appropriate interaction with the service dog. This training must also be provided for the regular school bus driver and for those drivers who are employed on the bus as Spare Drivers. This training shall be coordinated between the Principal and the Board's

Transportation Division. Any relevant documentation shall be held on the school bus.

- 2.4.14 Personal care of the animal must be established (who is the handler; who accompanies the handler outside; who picks up after the animal; etc.).
- 2.4.15 A transition plan for introducing the dog to the school environment will be made. Consistent routines must be established and student and community notification plans put in place. Rules and protocols (such as handling and touching the dog, etc.,) must be clearly communicated to students via an assembly or other in-school training.
- 2.4.16 Information should go home to the school community regarding the arrival of the service dog in the school either via newsletter or letter home once a firm plan is developed.
- 2.4.17 A copy of the parent/guardian request and the medical diagnosis will be retained in the student's confidential documents envelope.
- 2.4.18 Signs must be placed on the entrance doors of the school to inform visitors of the dog's presence. (Certified Training Agency will often provide these signs.)
- 2.4.19 An appropriate fire and emergency exit plan must be developed for the student and service dog.
- 2.4.20 The Administrative Checklist for the implementation of the service dog into the school environment must be completed. (Appendix D)
- 2.4.21 A transition plan should be established and implemented pertaining to changes in staffing as they occur or at the start of each school year.

## 2.5 TRAINING AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.5.1 Service dogs and their handlers received specialized training to work together and consequently the dog should provide minimal risk or impact to others.
- 2.5.2 It is the responsibility of the dog's trainers/handler and/or parent(s)/guardian(s) to:
  - a) Walk the dog to/from school or facilitate the use of the bus/loading onto the bus;
  - b) Provide the required equipment and dog care items;
  - c) Assume financial responsibility for the dog's training, veterinary care, and other related costs;
  - d) Work cooperatively with school staff to make this accommodation a success and assist the Principal with communicating information to the school community;
  - e) Provide the Principal with required documentation in a timely fashion;

f) Inform the Principal of all relevant information that may affect the students and staff.

2.5.3 Generally, the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board will not place a dog with a person who does not have the ability to work as the primary caregiver for the dog, with the exception of autism service dogs.

2.5.4 In the case where a service dog is placed with a person who is unable, due to age, ability or other factors, to act as the primary caregiver or handler, the dog will be trained to work “for” an adult(s) for the child. This may include a teacher or an Educational Assistant taking responsibility as a handler or person with primary responsibility for the dog during school hours. Training will be provided by the service organization.

## 5.0 APPENDICES

- 5.1 Appendix A – Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Dog in the School
- 5.2 Appendix B – Request for Service Dog Involvement with a Student
- 5.3 Appendix C – Management Plan for the Care of the Service Dog
- 5.4 Appendix D – Checklist for Implementation of Service Dog into a School
- 5.5 Appendix E – Sample Parent/Guardian Letter or Newsletter Insert

**Superintendent Approved:** May 14/12

**Ref:** BP 403.20, Appendices A-E

**Monitoring Date:** Annually

**Revised:**

## APPENDIX A

**INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS REQUESTING  
A SERVICE DOG IN THE SCHOOL**

1. The success of the implementation of a service 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 you provide will be filed in your child's cumulative record.
2. The use of a service dog is considered to be an accommodation to help your child learn and to develop the necessary skills to achieve success at school. The use of a companion dog is generally not considered to be an accommodation under the Nova Scotia curriculum. If your child already has an Individualized Program Plan, it will be reviewed at a program planning team meeting, or one will be developed in consultation with you. The Principal will invite you, your child's teacher, a representative from Regional Office, the Resource teacher in the school and any other relevant school/Regional Office staff to the program planning team meeting to discuss your child's needs, the accommodations that are already in place for your child, as well as the additional assistance provided by a service dog.
3. The information you provide will help the Principal to implement your request. It is important that you provide information that addresses the safety of the students and staff. For example, the Principal needs to know that the dog has no history of nipping, biting or growling at children or adults, nor exhibits aggressive protective behaviours.
4. The well-being of the dog is also very important. Its care, handling and training needs will be addressed, and your input as a trained handler is valuable. The Principal also 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 and students about interacting with the dog will need to be included in the planning to be as consistent and fair to the dog as possible.
5. It is customary to provide an information session for the school community. 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.
6. After all the discussion and planning is in place, the goal will be to implement the plan as soon as possible.
7. Your responsibilities include:
  - transporting or walking the dog to and from school;
  - providing the required equipment and dog care items;
  - assuming financial responsibility for the dog's training, veterinary care, and other related costs;
  - working co-operatively with the school staff to make this accommodation a success;
  - assisting the Principal to communicate relevant information to the school community;
  - providing the Principal with required documentation in a timely fashion; and
  - informing the Principal of all relevant information that may affect the students and staff.
8. Once the necessary information has been discussed, the Principal will consult with the Director of Programs and Services and the Consultant of Student Services prior to the admittance and implementation of the service dog into the school.
9. A series of planning steps must take place to ensure a smooth transition for the entry of the service dog.

**APPENDIX B**

**REQUEST FOR SERVICE DOG INVOLVEMENT WITH A STUDENT**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ D.O.B. \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of Parent(s)/Guardians(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

a) I/We request that \_\_\_\_\_ be allowed to use a service dog at school and at school-related activities.

b) Service the dog will provide the student with: \_\_\_\_\_

c) Length of time the student and dog have worked together? \_\_\_\_\_

d) Duration of this requested intervention? \_\_\_\_\_

e) Additional information that will assist the Principal (e.g. safety, behaviour, or temperament of the dog issues). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- f) I/We understand that it is our responsibility to
- transport or walk the dog to and from school, or facilitate the use of bus transportation;
  - provide the required equipment and dog care items;
  - assume financial responsibility for the dog's training, veterinary care, and other related costs;
  - work co-operatively with the school staff to make this accommodation a success;
  - assist the Principal to communicate relevant information to the school community;
  - provide the Principal with required documentation in a timely fashion; and
  - inform the Principal of all relevant information that may affect our child, the other students, and/or staff.

g) I/we give permission for this information to be shared with the school community.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**For office use only:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



**APPENDIX C**

**MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE CARE OF THE SERVICE DOG**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ D.O.B.: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID#: \_\_\_\_\_ School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Dog: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Person(s) responsible in the school environment: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Where possible and feasible, these responsibilities should be handled by the student in the same manner as at home. Care of the animal is also a skill to be taught.

**Water needs:** (e.g. provision of water bowl, procedures for use, cleaning, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Bladder/Bowel Needs of Dog** (e.g. – frequency, location, disposal, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Other considerations** (e.g. rest periods away from work, hot and winter weather, etc.)

1. Rest periods away from work \_\_\_\_\_

2. Hot weather \_\_\_\_\_

3. Winter weather \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Principal \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

Checklist for Implementation of Service Dog into a School	Date of Completion & Notes
Advise parent/guardian and student 18 years and older making the request that AVRSB has a procedure to follow before a decision is made.	
Provide parent(s)/guardian(s) with the form <b>Request for Service Dog Involvement With a Student and Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Dog in the School.</b>	
Inform Director of Programs and Services and Coordinator of Student Services of the request.	
Ensure that parent/guardian submits copies of the following documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> copy of recommendation for service dog by Physicians</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> copy of dog's registration with a recognized training centre</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> copy of current, official vaccination certificate for the dog</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> proof the dog is registered in Canada</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> copy of training certification of parent(s)/guardian(s)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> proof of municipal dog license, if applicable</li> </ul>	
Consider /research implications related to student in the school AND on busses (considering students from other schools) regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allergies</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fear of dogs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cultural sensitivities and other issues</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plan for required accommodations</li> </ul>	
Convene a program planning team meeting with the following in attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Parents/Guardians and/or student over the age of 18</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Classroom teachers(s)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Resource teacher</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Regional Office Staff</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Representative from the dog training centre</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Educational Assistant(s) who work with the student.</li> </ul>	
Review the request with respect to its consistency with the student's program plan.	
Inform school staff that a request has been made and receive their input.	
Inform Transportation Division that a request has been made and receive input.	
Inform school community and receive their input.	
Meet with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or student 18 years or older, to inform them of the information you have received, and to review the implementation plan, including the fire and emergency exit plans, and Management Plan for the Care of the Dog.	
Advise the Director of Programs and Services and the Coordinator of Student Services of your actions.	
Develop a communication strategy to inform students, staff, community and relevant employee representatives. Include information in registration packages.	
Post signs on the entrance doors, and at any other appropriate places to advise visitors of the dog's presence.	
Monitor and review the implementation on a regular basis.	
File relevant documentation and correspondence in the documentation file of student's cumulative record card.	

## APPENDIX E

## SAMPLE PARENT/GUARDIAN LETTER OR NEWSLETTER INSERT

{SCHOOL LETTERHEAD}

DATE

Dear Parents/Guardians:

RE: Service Dog at School

Beginning on (date) one of the grade ( ) students at our school will attend class with a \_\_\_\_\_ (Guide, Hearing, Service, Autism Service) dog to support (his/her) program plan.

Successful transition and entry of the dog into the school environment has been planned in accordance with the AVRSB "USE OF A SERVICE DOG BY A STUDENT" Policy and Administrative Procedures and with input and consultation from the school and broader community.

The dog has been specially trained and is a Certified Service Dog. This is a working dog and will be easily identified as one by the vest it wears. Students will be introduced to the dog at a school assembly or in school training and rules for interaction will be reviewed. Working dogs should not be petted or approached without the permission of the dog's handler.

Should you wish further information or would like to speak further about the entry of a service dog into the school setting, please do not hesitate to contact the school directly.

Sincerely,

Principal Name

c. Superintendent