

NLSchools refers to all public K-12 English schools and school related facilities under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education, Education Operations Branch and all employees working therein providing services and supports to such schools, including those who work in the areas of school facilities, student transportation, program implementation, student services, and procurement.

Policy Name

Service Dogs

Policy Statement

The Department of Education recognizes the importance of the use of specially trained Service Dogs as a strategy to accommodate certain individuals with disabilities, and permits the use of Service Dogs in schools and on school related property as necessary.

Background

The Department of Education complies with provincial legislation in its delivery of educational services. The provincial [Human Rights Act 2010](#) and the [Service Animal Act](#) provide for the accommodation of individuals with disabilities who use specially trained Service Dogs. Service Dogs may provide assistance for children and adults who are visually and hearing impaired, and/or have other physical and developmental disabilities. They may also serve to alert individuals with impending seizures or other medical crises.

The department also promotes a philosophy of inclusive education and provides school-based services for students with exceptionalities in accordance with the Department of Education's [Service Delivery Model for Students with Exceptionalities](#). Students with exceptionalities may require a range of services, depending on their needs and level of functioning. The Department establishes procedures and practices that are safe, appropriate and consistent and that enable students with health or medical needs to attend and participate in school.

Scope

This policy applies to any student who requires a Service Dog in order to attend and participate in school programs and activities.

This policy also applies to any employee who requires a Service Dog in order to carry out their duties within NLSchools.

Definitions

SERVICE DOGS (INCLUDING GUIDE DOGS, ASSISTANCE DOGS AND SKILLS DOGS)

For the purposes of this policy a Service Dog is one that is trained to assist someone with a disability and that meets the Canadian standard for Service Dogs and their training. The Special Skills Dog (SSD) or National Service Dog (NSD) will have a distinctive harness and leash and/or saddlebag and vest. Examples of Service Dogs are:

- A Seizure Response Dog: Trained to assist a person with a seizure disorder.
- A Social Signal Dog: Trained to assist a person with autism.
- A Guide Dog: Trained to assist a blind/visually impaired or deaf/hard of hearing person.

APPROVED SERVICE DOG TRAINING FACILITIES

For the purposes of this policy, Service Dogs must be certified and registered within Canada. Training facilities for any type of service, guide or working dog must be members of, and accredited by either:

- a) [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; or
- b) [Assistance Dog International](#), Inc. (ADI): ADI is a not-for-profit organization that train and place Assistance Dogs.

Dogs used for students with autism must have a certificate of training from [Guide Dogs of Canada](#) or [National Service Dogs Training Centre](#).

COMPANION/SUPPORT/THERAPY DOGS

For the purposes of this policy a companion/support/therapy dog is a dog that provides companionship and emotional support to a student who has a developmental, behavioral or physical disability. These dogs may have training but do not have specialized training to provide services for a disabled person, and fall outside the scope of the provincial Service Animal Act.

DOG HANDLER (“HANDLER”)

The Handler for a Service Dog is normally the individual who is utilizing the Dog's services. For the purposes of this policy, when a student is not able to handle the Service Dog, the Dog is supervised by an adult who is responsible for both the student and the Dog. The Handler at school for a student will be an employee as designated by the department and trained by an approved Service Dog training facility. Ongoing training will be provided by the student's family. All costs for training the Handler will be the responsibility of the student's parent/guardian.

TETHERING

Tethering is a term used by National Service Dogs to indicate the attachment of the Service Dog to individual with special needs. In this case, the dog is attached to the individual by both a leash and a belt system. The individual is encouraged to control the Dog by the leash but the Dog also responds to adult commands and may direct the individual's movement by means of the belt system. In this manner the individual is "tethered" to the Dog.

DISABILITY

For the purposes of this policy disability is defined as:

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes: diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.
- A condition of mental impairment or developmental disability.
- A learning disability or a dysfunction in one of more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.
- A mental disorder.

Policy Directives

Employees

1. Employees must provide documentation as required by Human Resources Division, in support of a request to use a Service Dog in the workplace.
2. The Senior Management Official (Human Resources) or designate must approve the use of any Service Dog in the workplace.

Students

1. Parents/guardians must provide documentation as required to the school administrator, in support of a request to use a Service Dog in school.
2. The Senior Management Official (Programs) or designate must approve the use of any Service Dog in a school.
3. The School Administrator will:
 - Obtain the appropriate documentation from the parent/guardian.

- Provide parents/guardians with information as outlined in the administrative procedures/regulations.
- Advise the relevant Senior Management Official (Programs) or designate once a request has been received.
- Arrange a school-based team meeting following approval for the use of a service dog in a school.

Administrative Procedures

Employees who want to request to use a Service Dog in the workplace must contact the Human Resources Division.

The Senior Management Official (Programs) or designate is responsible for the monitoring and implementation of this policy as it pertains to students.

1. Required Documentation

Parents/guardians must provide the following documentation to the school administrator in support of their request to use a Service Dog in school:

- 1.1 A letter from a physician confirming the diagnosis of the recognized special needs of the student and a recommendation for the use of a Service Dog.
- 1.2 A completed **Request for Service Dog Involvement with a Student** form and appropriate documentation.
- 1.3 Information regarding the activities the Service Dog will perform, which must be consistent with the needs or other information contained in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Individual Support Services Plan (ISSP).
- 1.4 A certificate of training for the Service Dog from the [Guide Dogs of Canada](#), or other approved training facility.
- 1.5 Proof of up-to-date vaccinations, a municipal service dog license, and confirmation that the Service Dog is in good health.
 - a) These documents must be provided annually.
- 1.6 A copy of training certification of the individual responsible for the Service Dog.

2. Approval Process

- 2.1 The School Administrator facilitates the application/communication process with parents/guardians, students, school staff, and NLSchools staff. (See [Appendix A](#))
- 2.2 The School Administrator will ensure parents/guardians have the following

information:

- a) Information on the application procedures established by the department.
- b) A copy of the information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Dog in the School ([Appendix B](#)).
- c) A copy of the Request for Service Dog Involvement with a Student form.
- d) Notification that a copy of the parent request and letter from the physician will be placed in the student's cumulative record.
- e) Notification that the parent/guardian is financially responsible for the provision of the certified Service Dog.

3. The School Administrator will also:

- 3.1 Inform school staff that a request has been made and invite their input.
- 3.2 Inform parents/guardians of all the students in any classes where the Service Dog will be present and gather information on allergies, phobias, or other concerns.
- 3.3 Inform the school council that a request has been made and invite their input.

4. The School Administrator must advise the Senior Management Official (Programs) or designate once a request has been received and provide a copy of the required documentation as outlined in #1 as well as any information gathered through the process outlined in #3.

5. The Senior Management Official (Programs) or designate will make the decision on a case by case basis as to whether a Service Dog can be used with a student in a school. All circumstances of a particular case, including the individual needs of the student being assisted by the Dog and the needs of other students and staff, will be considered. The decision-maker will:

- 5.1 Review and assess all information in consultation with the School Administrator.
- 5.2 Communicate the department's decision to the school administrator via **Request for Service Dog Involvement with a Student** and to the parent/guardian in writing.

6. School Implementation

6.1 SETTING UP A SCHOOL-BASED TEAM

Upon approval, the school administrator will establish a school-based team meeting and invite the following individuals to attend:

- a) Parents/guardians
- b) Student (where appropriate)
- c) Classroom teacher(s)
- d) Program Resource teacher
- e) Instructional Resource teacher
- f) NLSchools Student Support Services representative
- g) Representative of the Service Dog provider
- h) Other staff as determined necessary for planning purposes.

6.2 The meeting should address the following items:

- a) Ensuring that the use of a Service Dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process.
- b) The purpose and function of the Service Dog.
- c) Clarification that the parent/guardian is solely responsible for the overall care of the Service Dog.
- d) The personal care of the Service Dog during the school day (e.g. Where will the dog's water bowl be kept? Who will fill the water bowl? Who will walk outside and remove and dispose of animal waste?). Use Management Plan for the Care of the Service Dog form ([Appendix C](#)).
- e) Educating the student's school team on the role of the Service Dog and on the rules of conduct concerning the Service Dog.
- f) Educating the student body on the role of the Service Dog and on the rules of conduct concerning the Service Dog.
- g) Examination of the seating arrangements and layout of classroom, specifically to protect students with allergic reactions.
- h) Requirement, if any, for transportation of the Service Dog.
- i) Development of a transition plan including routines to be established and expectations.
- j) Dates for integration of the student with the Service Dog, as necessary.
- k) The school administrator must ensure that minutes of the school-based team meetings are kept and provided to all members, and a copy is placed in the student's cumulative file.

7. School Administrator Responsibilities

- 7.1 Inform all staff and school council of the presence of the Service Dog.
 - 7.2 Send a letter home to parents/guardians of students in the class where the Service Dog will be present, offering to answer questions or address any concerns. ([See Appendix D](#))
 - 7.3 Send a letter home to parents/guardians in the school community to inform them of the presence of the Service Dog in the school. ([See Appendix E](#))
 - 7.4 If required, notify the Manager of Student Transportation, Transportation and Infrastructure. The School Administrator will send a letter informing the parents of students who will be sharing transportation, where the Service Dog will be present. ([See Appendix F](#))
 - 7.5 Arrange for demonstrations by the Service Dog provider for the student body, staff and/or the community, as deemed necessary, to provide education and awareness of the service dog in the school.
 - 7.6 Develop an appropriate emergency plan that will include evacuation, lock down or any other relevant procedures. The School Administrator shall collaborate with the appropriate municipal emergency agencies (ie. notification to the Fire Department regarding the existence of the Service Dog) in the development of the emergency plan.
 - 7.7 Ensure that signage is placed on each entry door of the school, which informs visitors of the presence of a Service Dog.
 - 7.8 Arrange a visit to the school, when students are not present, in order to familiarize the Service Dog with the school site.
 - 7.9 Monitor and review documentation annually to ensure that all registrations, vaccinations, licenses, certificates and additional pertinent information is updated.
 - 7.10 Ensure that the management plan for the care of the Service Dog is updated annually.
 - 7.11 Maintain open communication with parent(s)/guardian(s), staff, and school council to proactively address concerns, as they arise.
8. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities
- The parent/guardian is responsible for the following:
- 8.1 Following all processes and procedures as required by the department.
 - 8.2 All financial responsibility for the provision of the certified dog service, including training of the employee handler at school.
 - 8.3 The personal care and physical needs of the Service Dog.
 - 8.4 Assisting the school-based team with the development of the plan for care of the Service Dog while at the school and/or during school-sponsored

activities.

9. Dog Handler Responsibilities

- 9.1 Provide an up-to-date Criminal Reference Check including a Vulnerable Sector Screen.
- 9.2 Abide by all confidentiality and privacy requirements within the school setting.
- 9.3 Ensure his/her presence does not interfere with the normal operation of a classroom or the school.

Appendix A

School Administrator's Checklist for Service Dogs in Schools

√	ITEM
	Parent/guardian has been provided with Form Request for Service Dog Involvement with a Student and Appendix B : Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting Use of a Service Dog in a School.
	SEO – Student Support Services has been informed of the request.
	Senior Management Official (Programs) has been informed of the request.
	Parent/Guardian has submitted the following information:
	<i>Recommendation for Service Dog by Physician</i>
	<i>Copy of Service Dog's registration with approved training facility</i>
	<i>Copy of current, official vaccination certificate for Dog</i>
	<i>Proof Service Dog is registered in Canada</i>
	<i>Copy of training certification for parent/guardian</i>
	<i>Proof of municipal dog license, if applicable</i>
	The following related to Service Dog in the school and on the bus/in vehicle has been reviewed:
	<i>Allergies</i>
	<i>Fear of dogs</i>
	<i>Cultural sensitivities/other issues</i>
	<i>Plan for required accommodations</i>
	Meeting has been planned/held with school planning team with the following in attendance, where applicable:
	<i>Parent/guardian</i>
	<i>Student</i>
	<i>Classroom teacher</i>
	<i>Resource teacher</i>
	<i>Student Assistant</i>
	<i>Representative from dog training centre</i>
	<i>NLSchools Office/Student Support Services Representative(s)</i>
	Request has been reviewed for consistency with IEP/ISSP.
	School staff have been informed of the request.
	Transportation Division has been informed of the request.
	Parents/guardians of students in school community have been informed of the request.
	Once use of a Service Dog has been approved by the Regional ADE (Programs):
	Signs are posted at entrances to school.
	Implementation plan has been developed, including care of the Dog and protocols for emergencies.
	Relevant documentation is retained in the student's cumulative record.

Appendix B

Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting Use of Service Dog in 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 provincial curriculum. If your child already has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), 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, the Resource teacher in the school and any other relevant school/NLSchools 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 Service 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 may be asked to participate in an 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 Service 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 reviewed, the Principal will consult with the Regional Assistant Director (Programs) and the Senior Education Officer (Student Support Services) prior to the approval and introduction 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 C

Management Plan for the Care of the Service Dog

School: _____

School Year: _____

Student Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Person Responsible in the School Environment: _____

Position: _____

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

2. Bladder/Bowel Needs of Dog:

3. Other considerations (e.g. rest periods, hot/winter weather):

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date: _____
M D Y

Appendix D

Sample Letter to the Parents/Guardians of Students in the Classroom (SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)

Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Service Dog in our school assisting one of our students, and this student and the Service Dog will be part of your child's class.

This Service Dog is a highly trained companion for our student and is able to assist in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for this student. Service dogs are comparable to a Guide Service Dog and are included in every aspect of a student's life. The child's right to have a Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

There will be information sessions at our school for students to introduce the Service Dog and to integrate the Service Dog into our daily routines. All of our students will be instructed as to the proper procedures around the Dog and will be information that this is a working Service Dog and not a pet while at school.

If you have any specific questions or concerns regarding the presence of the Service Dog in your child's class, please do not hesitate to contact myself or the Vice-Principal.

Thank you for your understanding and support in this matter.

Sincerely,

Principal

Appendix E

Sample Letter to Parents/Guardians of the School Community (SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)

Date:

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Service Dog in our school assisting one of our students.

This Service Dog is a highly trained companion for our student and is able to assist in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for this student. Service dogs are comparable to a Guide Service Dog and are included in every aspect of a student's life. The child's right to have a Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

There will be information sessions at our school for students to introduce the Service Dog and to integrate the Service Dog into our daily routines. All of our students will be instructed as to the proper procedures around the Dog and will be informed that this is a working Service Dog and not a pet while at school.

If you have any specific questions or concerns regarding the presence of the Service Dog in our school, please do not hesitate to contact myself or the Vice-Principal.

Thank you for your understanding and support in this matter.

Sincerely,

Principal

Appendix F

Sample Letter to Parents/Guardians of Students Sharing Transportation (SCHOOL LETTERHEAD)

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that there will be a Service Dog in our school assisting one of our students, and that the student and the Service Dog will be sharing transportation with your child daily to and from school.

This Service Dog is a highly trained companion for our student and is able to assist in many of the routine activities which may pose some challenges for this student. Service dogs are comparable to a Guide Service Dog and are included in every aspect of a student's life. The child's right to have a Service Dog is protected under Human Rights legislation.

There will be information sessions at our school for students to introduce the Service Dog and to integrate the Service Dog into our daily routines. All of our students will be instructed as to the proper procedures around the Dog and will be information that this is a working Service Dog and not a pet while at school.

If you have any specific questions or concerns regarding the Service Dog travelling with your child, please do not hesitate to contact myself or the Vice-Principal.

Thank you for your understanding and support in this matter.

Sincerely,

Principal