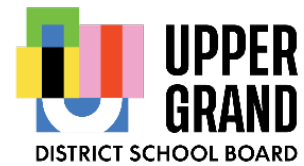


Service Animals for Students Procedures Manual 517-A



Category:	Students
Administered by:	Superintendent of Program
First Adopted:	May 2018 (<i>Oct 2006 as Protocol for Service Dogs in Schools for Students with Special Needs</i>)
Revision History:	January 2020
Next Review:	2022-23 school year

1. General

Service animals have traditionally been highly trained dogs that assist individuals with various tasks of daily living (guide dog, hearing and signal dog, mobility assistance dog, seizure response dog). The Upper Grand District School Board recognizes that for some students, attending school with a trained service dog is an accommodation that can assist a student with a demonstrated disability-related learning need to access the curriculum, integrate more fully into the school community, and build independence.

These procedures outline the individualized process for the consideration of a service animal accommodation for students, and if approved, procedures for the admittance and integration of a trained service animal into the school environment.

- 1.1 Pursuant to the *Education Act* and regulations, a school building is not a public space and thus the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* does not apply to a student's use of a service animal when accessing education services in school buildings.
- 1.2 Only in exceptional circumstances, subject to the standards of undue hardship pursuant to the [*Human Rights Code*](#), will the board consider:
 - a service animal other than a dog as an accommodation for a student, and only if other reasonable methods of accommodation in the school setting have been unsuccessful in meeting the demonstrated disability-related learning needs of the student
 - an application for a student who will not be acting as the primary trained handler of the service animal
- 1.3 Any determination of whether a service animal is an appropriate

accommodation for a student while receiving education services at school is a decision of the school board.

- 1.3.1 A regulated health professional cannot unilaterally prescribe that a service animal be a specific accommodation while the student is receiving education services at school.
- 1.4 The board does not provide service animals to students. The board encourages any family considering the purchase of a guide dog, service dog or other service animal to meet with the school principal or superintendent before making a commitment.
- 1.5 The board does not permit training of potential service animals in the school setting or during school activities due to risks to safety, and risks of disruption and distraction in the learning environment.

2. Definitions

Adult student means a student who is 18 years of age or older, or 16 or 17 years of age and has removed themselves from the care and control of their custodial parent.

Disability

The Ontario [Human Rights Code](#) and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA) define "disability" as:

- a) "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, brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device;
- b) a condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability;
- c) a learning disability, or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language;
- d) a mental disorder, or
- e) an injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the [Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997](#) ("handicap")."

Guide dog means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations pursuant to the [Blind Persons' Rights Act](#).

Handler

The handler is the individual who is trained to manage the service animal's performance of support services. It is the expectation of the board that students for whom a service animal is providing services in the school will be the handler. It is recognized that there may be times when it is necessary for school staff to support the student in handling their service animal.

Service animal means, in the context of these procedures, an animal that provides support relating to a student's disability to assist that student in meaningfully accessing education.

Service dog is a dog that has been certified after successfully completing a training program provided by an accredited training organization.

3. Consideration of a Service Animal Accommodation Request

Service animals are recognized as an accommodation strategy that may aid the student to access the curriculum or perform daily living activities. The service provided by the animal must be consistent with the goals identified in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), and cannot otherwise be met by an alternative accommodation. The determination of whether the animal is an appropriate accommodation in the school setting to accommodate a demonstrated disability-related learning need of a student is a decision of the board.

3.1 While it is the expectation of the Upper Grand District School Board that students utilizing a service animal at school will be the animal's handler, the board recognizes that there may be times when it is necessary for school staff to support the student in handling their service animal. Only in exceptional circumstances, subject to the standards of undue hardship pursuant to the [Human Rights Code](#), will the board consider an application for a student who will not be acting as the primary handler of the service animal.

3.2 Requests

Parents/guardians/adult students wanting to have a student attend school with their service animal must submit a request form (517-1) to the

principal. Requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In order to determine how to best meet the learning needs of the student, the following circumstances of a particular case are considered:

- the student's demonstrated disability-related needs
- how the service animal supports the student's disability-related needs
- alternative accommodations that are available that would otherwise meet the student's disability-related needs
- professional assessments and/or any associated documentation from the student's medical professionals indicating how the service provided by the animal cannot otherwise be accommodated by the school
- observations of the student and animal interaction by special education staff
- the current academic performance of the student
- any training or certification of the service animal
- the impact of a service animal on other students as well as staff in the school

3.2.1 Once the request and supporting documentation submitted is complete and appropriate, then a meeting shall be convened by the principal. This meeting shall be held to discuss the student's needs with respect to the Individual Education Plan (IEP), and consider the service animal accommodation request. Attendance at this meeting may include:

- the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and student, if appropriate, or adult student
- the student's teacher(s)
- the Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)
- a representative from the training organization, if applicable
- any other relevant school staff
- any other persons for advocacy and/or support

3.2.2 The decision pertaining to the request and rationale will be documented in writing by the principal and filed in the Special Needs Assessment folder of the student's Ontario Student Record (OSR).

3.3 Service Animal Training

3.3.1 All service animals must be able to provide the student with accommodation services in an appropriate manner irrespective of the environment.

3.3.2 All service dogs used by students in the school must have been fully trained at an accredited training organization attesting that the dog and student handler have successfully completed training and may safely engage in a public setting without creating a risk of safety or a risk of disruption within a school setting. Confirmation of certificates of training received within 6 months may be required.

3.3.2.1 An *accredited training organization* is a guide dog or service dog trainer that is accredited by one of the following:

- International Guide Dog Federation ("IGDF") which develops and ensures compliance with the standards by which guide dogs for the blind/low vision are trained by its member organizations
- Assistance Dogs International ("ADI") which develops and ensures compliance with the standards by which guide, hearing and service dogs are trained by its member organizations
- a guide dog or service dog trainer that attests to compliance with the [Mehgan Search and Rescue Standard in Support of Accessibility: Persons with a Disability Teamed with Service Dogs](#) standard for training (MSAR)

3.3.2.2 Any service dog training other than that outlined above may be considered as appropriate.

3.4 **Role of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Adult Student**

Parents/guardians/adult students requesting an accommodation for the student to attend school with a service animal are responsible for the following:

- submitting a completed 517-1 form to the principal (see Appendix A)
- any supporting letters of assessment from regulated health professionals confirming the disability-related supports provided by the service animal for the student that cannot otherwise be accommodated by the school
- proof of any training certification for the service animal and/or student handler from a recognized training centre, if applicable
 - a commitment to maintain the training over school break periods to foster successful re-integration into the school environment
- a certificate not greater than three (3) months old from a veterinarian qualified to practice veterinary medicine in the Province of Ontario attesting that the animal is an adult; identifying the age and breed; does not have a disease or illness that might pose a risk to humans; has received all required vaccinations; and is in good health to assist the student
- proof that the service animal owner carries general liability insurance (minimum coverage of \$1 million) which includes coverage for the service animal in the event of an injury or death as a result of the service animal. The UGDSB does not carry liability and/or medical insurance for the service animal and is not responsible if the service animal is lost, stolen or injured.

3.5 **Role of the Principal**

3.5.1 Principals who receive a request to accommodate a student wishing to attend school with their service animal shall review the request submission for completeness and may request additional supporting information to aid in the assessment. The principal will notify the school's superintendent and the Superintendent of Program of the service animal request by forwarding the 517-1 form and any supporting documentation provided.

3.5.2 Once the Superintendent of Program deems the documentation submitted with the request as complete and appropriate, the principal shall convene a meeting. This meeting shall be held to discuss the student's needs with respect to the Individual Education Plan (IEP), and consider the service animal accommodation request. Attendance at this meeting may include:

- the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) or adult student, and student if appropriate
- the student's teacher(s)
- the Special Education Resource Teacher (SERT)
- a representative from the dog training organization, if applicable
- any other relevant school staff
- any other persons for advocacy and/or support

As the board is responsible for protecting the safety, health and emotional needs of all students and staff, allowing a student to attend school with their service animal will be considered in accordance with the duty to accommodate the demonstrated disability-related needs of the student to the point of undue hardship pursuant to the Ontario *Human Rights Code*. Where necessary in the decision-making process, the rights and needs of one person may have to be balanced against the rights and needs of another.

4. Approval and Implementation of Service Animal Accommodation

4.1 Role of the Principal

The principal shall be responsible for communication with the parent/guardian/adult student about the decision pertaining to the request and where approved, the accommodation process. A complete checklist of principal responsibilities with respect to a service animal accommodation request can be found in Appendix B.

4.1.1 If it is determined that alternative accommodations to a service animal to meet the student's demonstrated disability-related needs are available, the principal will document in writing the rationale for the decision. The decision will be communicated to the

parent/guardian/adult student and the documentation will be filed in the Special Needs Assessment folder of the student's OSR.

- 4.1.2 If the service animal accommodation request is approved in principle, the principal will:
 - 4.1.2.1 inform and receive input from students, staff, school council, and the community regarding the pending arrival of the service animal, while considering the privacy rights of the student seeking to bring a service animal to school (see sample letters in Appendix D). Letters will be distributed to the school community, and sent directly to any families of students who will be in the same classroom or on the same bus as the service animal. These letters will outline the purpose of the service animal and the rules regarding conduct around the animal. Any input received could affect the service animal accommodation and/or help facilitate the implementation process.
 - 4.1.2.2 inform Service de transport de Wellington-Dufferin Student Transportation Services (STWDSTS) if the student with the service animal is transported to school by bus (see Section 5)
 - 4.1.2.3 review the Management Plan for the Care of the Service Animal
 - 4.1.2.4 review the fire and emergency exit plans as they relate to the presence of the service animal
 - 4.1.2.5 develop a strategy for introducing the service animal to the school environment to help with the transition. This may include scheduling some school visits for the student and service animal to familiarize the animal with the school
 - 4.1.2.6 arrange any information sessions as necessary for students, staff and the community to learn more about the service animal's presence in the school and expected behaviour

- 4.1.2.7 post signs on the school's entry doors to advise visitors of the service animal's presence (see Appendix E)
- 4.1.2.8 meet with the student's teacher(s) to discuss and plan for the inclusion of the service animal in all school activities (e.g., assemblies, field trips)
- 4.1.2.9 monitor and review the implementation of the service animal on a regular basis
- 4.1.2.10 review whether the use of the service animal continues to meet the student's disability-related needs. This review shall occur at minimum annually during the Identification Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) process and/or within the first 30 days of each school year, or as deemed necessary by the student, parent(s)/guardian(s) or school administration. This review will include all documentation submitted by the parent(s)/guardian(s)
- 4.1.2.11 file all relevant documentation and correspondence in the Special Needs Assessment folder of the student's OSR

4.2 **Role of the Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Adult Student**

Upon approval of a service animal accommodation request, the parent(s)/guardian(s)/adult student will be responsible for:

- 4.2.1 providing any further documentation requested by the principal that supports the use of the service animal by the student
- 4.2.2 submitting a Management Plan for the Care of the Service Animal to the principal (see Appendix C)
- 4.2.3 assisting the principal to communicate relevant information to the school community, if necessary
- 4.2.4 helping to facilitate the transition of the student with their service animal to school
- 4.2.5 ensuring the service animal is always wearing a vest and leash or harness when not in a contained crate, if appropriate

- 4.2.6 ensuring the biological needs of the service animal are tended to during the school day. If an elimination accident should occur, the custodian will be consulted on the proper cleaning materials for the handler or designate to use.
- 4.2.7 all financial costs related to the provision of the service animal, which may include training for school staff

Once implementation of the service animal commences, the following are responsibilities of the parent(s)/guardian(s)/adult student:

- 4.2.8 work co-operatively with school staff to make this accommodation a success
- 4.2.9 review the use of the service animal annually with the principal, or as deemed necessary by the student, parent(s) or school administration
- 4.2.10 transport or walk the service animal to and from school, or facilitate the use of transportation
- 4.2.11 all costs related to the care of the dog (e.g., food, grooming, harness, crate, veterinary care)

4.3 **Exclusion of a Service Animal**

Where the use of a service animal in school has been approved, the animal may be excluded from access to the school or part of the school when:

- 4.3.1 there is a risk to the health of students/staff, or the physical or mental well-being of students as a result of the service animal's presence
- 4.3.2 the service animal's behaviour is distracting, disruptive or aggressive, including making noise, failing to follow commands, growling or nipping. In the event that this behaviour occurs, the handler will be required to remove the service animal from the classroom immediately and the student's parent/guardian will be asked to pick up the service animal from the school. Alternative options for accommodation will be discussed.

- 4.3.3 there has been a change in the student's circumstances or disability-related needs which had supported the original approval or a change to the needs of students/staff such that there is a new competing right
- 4.3.4 exclusion is required by another law. Examples include the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#) and the [Food Safety and Quality Act](#). The former Act prohibits service animals in places where food is prepared, processed, or handled (e.g., kitchen of a school cafeteria or culinary arts classroom), although service dogs are permitted where food is served and sold (e.g., school cafeteria or lunchroom). An additional example is the restriction on certain breeds (e.g., pit bull terriers) that are prohibited under the [Ontario Dog Owners' Liability Act](#)

5. Transportation of Students with a Service Animal

- 5.1 Under the AODA and the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, service dogs are permitted to ride the bus with their student handler, subject to the school's duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship.
- 5.2 Once a principal has determined that a service animal will be working with a student in the school who is transported to the school by STWDSTS, the principal will contact the Manager of STWDSTS, the Superintendent of Finance, the school's superintendent, and the Special Education Resource Teacher.
 - 5.2.1 The principal will provide any pertinent documentation about the service animal, including any training certification
- 5.3 STWDSTS will ensure that there is documentation about the service dog with the relevant route information for all drivers involved.
- 5.4 Basic training for the driver and other students on the bus will be provided by the parent, if necessary, to ensure there is an understanding of what is allowed. This training may include one or more training runs.
- 5.5 The service animal should not sit or lie in the aisle of the bus. Wherever possible, the animal should be in the seat compartment and/or floor, away from the aisle, to prevent the animal from becoming a safety hazard.
- 5.6 STWDSTS must ensure that any students from other schools or school boards travelling with the service animal are advised of the animal's

presence (see Appendix D for a sample letter).

- 5.7 Specialized transportation shall not be provided solely for the purpose of enabling the service animal to travel to and from school with the student.
- 5.8 STWDSTS will follow the procedures outlined in their [Policy 040 Transporting Students with Service Dogs](#).