

## **AP 652 – SERVICE DOGS**

### **Background**

The Division is committed to the delivery of high quality education programs, supports and services that allow students with diverse needs to maximize their learning and achievement. The Division recognizes the needs of some students may require unique accommodation(s) including the use of a Service Dog, where necessitated by the student's learning profile and/or by medical restrictions such as blindness or low vision, deafness or hearing impairments as well as seizure disorder or autism.

The Division is committed to operating within the legal mandate of all relevant legislation in meeting the needs of its students and seeks to consider the health and safety of all students when making decisions regarding accommodations. The health and safety of all students is a priority.

### **Definitions**

Therapy Dog – A dog who is specifically trained for Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) and is under the control of a specially trained animal handler at all times. Therapy Dogs are deployed as part of a trained AAT Intervention Team directed by a health service professional with specialized AAT expertise. The use of Therapy Dogs and AAT is a specialized health service which is beyond the scope of the Division and will therefore not form part of an accommodation.

Service Dogs – A dog that has received specialized training through Assistance Dogs International and is accredited to assist a person with a recognized disability or medical restriction. (Assistance Dogs International is the recognized and approved entity for the training and certification of Service Dogs.)

### **Procedures**

#### **1. Meet with the Principal**

Prior to completing a Service Dog Application Form, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must meet with the Principal to discuss the following:

- a. The student's needs, medical restrictions, and/or learning profile;
- b. How existing accommodations and/or supports could address the student's needs during school hours; and
- c. Whether the Service Dog would address the student's needs more effectively than other available accommodations.

The Principal will consider whether the use of a Service Dog is consistent with the needs and recommendations of the Inclusion and Intervention Plan (IIP).

#### **2. Application Process**

Where it is determined that available accommodations are not effective, parents may apply to have a Service Dog accompany a student at school. All applications must be submitted to the Principal and include the following:

- Completed and signed AP 652 FORM – Service Dog Application
- AP 652 FORM – Medical Certificate completed and signed by the student's physician
- Certification documents from Assistance Dogs International indicating the Service Dog has received the specialized training needed to assist the student with his/her recognized disability or medical restriction

The Principal shall, on receiving the above documents and forms, meet with the designated Superintendent and follow the following process:

- Adjudicate the application and supporting documentation
- Determine whether the specific medical restriction is best addressed by the introduction of the Service Dog as an accommodation at the school
- Communicate the results of the application to the parents and provide instructions regarding any next steps necessary

If it is determined that a Service Dog would be the appropriate accommodation for the student's unique situation the Principal together with the designated Superintendent shall:

- Determine whether or not the introduction of a Service Dog into the school will represent an undue hardship (as per Human Rights Commission Policy) and/or negatively affect the medical restrictions of other students in the school
- Provide opportunity for staff and families at the school to express any concerns about the introduction of a Service Dog to the school
- If concerns are expressed, determine whether complementary accommodations can be made that support both parties
- Identify handlers who will fulfil the obligations of that role in accordance with the Human Rights Commission Policy on Service Animals.

### 3. Implementation

Prior to the introduction of the Service Dog into the school the following must be in place:

The parent/guardian must:

- Accept all liability that might be incurred as a result of the behavior of the Service Dog while present at the school and indemnify the Division in writing
- Provide proof of appropriate insurance coverage (third party liability of not less than \$1,000,000) naming the Division as an additional insured arising out of the named insured (for any damages caused by the Service Dog)
- Participate in meetings to ensure the bonding and training are progressing suitably well for the training agency to recommend the Service Dog's readiness to be at school
- Provide information in writing from the organization that trained the Service Dog indicating details around the personal care and physical needs of the Service

Dog including the safest and most environmentally sound place for the dog to relieve itself, the safe removal and disposal of dog waste, and any considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather. Any costs for waste disposal materials or needs of the Service Dog shall be borne by the parent/guardian.

- Provide proof of up-to-date vaccinations and licensing of the Service Dog
- Cooperate with the Principal to make arrangements for training of staff who will be in contact with the Service Dog
- Arrange with the training agency for training of school personnel in the use and care of the Service Dog while at school and assume all costs for the training
- Arrange for the Service Dog to visit the school to familiarize it with the school site
- Give permission to Division staff and volunteers acting as handlers to touch, feed or deal with the Service Dog in any way that may be required to ensure appropriate care of the Service Dog and the safety of students and staff
- Make arrangements for transportation of Service Dog to and from school

The Principal shall:

- Confirm who will be the designated handler(s) for the Service Dog and ensure training is provided
- Ensure the personal care and physical needs of the Service Dog are met (following the information provided by the training organization)
- Consider logistical arrangements in classes and hallways
- Implement complementary accommodations for staff or other students as needed (where allergies, phobias, etc. exist)
- Inform all staff, parents and the School Community Council regarding the introduction of a Service Dog
- Arrange for information sessions describing Service Dog procedures for the student body, staff and or community as deemed necessary to provide education and awareness
- Revise emergency procedures as required to include the Service Dog
- Post signs on each entry door of the school to advise staff, visitors and the community of the presence of a working Service Dog
- Retain the application, insurance and related documentation in the student's cumulative folder
- Ensure the Service Dog accommodation is described in detail in the student's IIP, including a measurement plan with clear indicators of the effectiveness of the accommodation

#### 4. Considerations and Limitations

The Division may impose reasonable conditions or restrictions relating to:

- Transportation of the Service Dog to and from school
- Restricting the presence of the Service Dog to specific areas in the school
- Exclusion from access to specific areas where required by other laws (food prep, etc.)
- Certain events, field trips and off-site events

Annual proof of vaccinations and licensing of the Service Dog as well as insurance coverage must be received by the school office.

The right to be accompanied by a Service Dog does not apply if the individual is not in control of the behavior of the Service Dog and no appropriate and trained handler is available.

If the student moves to a different school, the request for a Service Dog must be resubmitted and initiated in advance with the Principal at the new school.

The agreement to accommodate a Service Dog is reviewed annually and may be modified as required following the same process as set out in this administrative procedure.

The approval of the Service Dog as an accommodation may be terminated by the Division if the dog does not have up to date documentation, licensing, or vaccinations, or if the behavior or presence of the Service Dog poses a threat to the school, students or staff which cannot be mitigated.

References: Education Act  
Policy on Service Animals within Human Rights Code

Adapted from Saskatoon Public Schools Administrative Procedure 309