

Student Use of Service Animals in Schools	
Adopted: June 18, 2019	Last Reviewed/Revised: December 6, 2022
Next Scheduled Review: 2025-2026	
Associated Policies & Procedures: VI-46 (B) Use of Service Animals by the General Public VI-97 Student Use of Service Animals in Schools	

Purpose

This policy recognizes that students with diverse learning needs may require, at times, services and accommodations to their program to allow them to access education. In addition to accommodations and services that can be utilized through human resources, technology, behaviour plans and strategies, students may at times require the need of a service animal to support their medical, behaviour or academic needs. This policy outlines the expectations and process for schools to adhere to when considering admittance and integration of a service animal into the school environment for the benefit of a student.

Application and Scope

This policy applies to all individuals of the HCDSB who may be involved in the integration of a service animal into schools, including parents/guardians, principals, teachers and HCDSB personnel who may have duties and/or responsibilities under this policy.

References

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005](#)

[Blind Person's Rights Act](#)

[Education Act](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

[Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001](#)

[Policy/Program Memorandum \(PPM\) 163, School Board Policies on Service Animals](#)

[Special Education in Ontario, Kindergarten to Grade 12 – Policy and Resource Guide, 2017](#)

Definitions

Certified – means both the animal and handler have had training from a recognized Canadian training institution and the animal is registered as such in Canada.

Handler – The student with the disability or medical related need(s) for whom the certified service animal is performing services and who is managing and is responsible for the certified service animal’s performance of those services. It is the expectation of the HCDSB that the student utilizing a certified service animal will be the service animal’s Handler.

Service Animal – means a certified animal that provides supports relating to a student’s disability or medical related need(s) to assist that student in meaningfully accessing education.

Principles

- All students with exceptionalities, disabilities, or medical related need(s) shall receive appropriate special education programs and services and have regular opportunities with their peers, to enjoy the life of the school, and to participate in local community activities.
- To access education, students may at times require accommodations, modifications and/or services to allow for this access, including service animals.
- Building on student independence must be the underlying consideration when considering appropriate accommodations, modifications and services.
- Schools recognize that student independence increases when accommodations, modifications and services are least intrusive.
- Any determination on appropriate accommodations, modifications and services must be made on a case-by-case basis, based on the individual needs of each student.
- Parents/guardians and HCDSB staff should work collaboratively when requests are made for the consideration of Service Animals to support students in schools.
- Procedures and practices in the determination of whether to approve requests for Service Animals must be consistent and transparent to allow for meaningful consideration of requests for service animals to accompany students in school.
- School staff must consider the collection and review of data, when available, to help determine the appropriateness of utilizing service animals for students.
- The health, safety and any other appropriate concerns of other students and staff shall be considered when determining the approval for a service animal for students.
- Clear, timely and appropriate communication must be provided to school communities when service animals are approved to accompany students in schools.
- The HCDSB must work collaboratively with Halton Student Transportation Systems (HSTS) when reviewing and considering students with service animals and how they can access board transportation.
- Requests for the use of a service animal should be approved when school/HCDSB level staff have determined that it is the best accommodation to support the student’s demonstrated disability or medical related needs.
- The use of service animals by the general public is covered in a separate and specific procedure.



Requirements

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- The HCDSB must implement a process for data collection and collect data regularly to help inform the policy and make amendments as appropriate.
- The HCDSB must communicate to Principals and appropriate staff the expectations and directives in both the Policy and Administrative Procedure.
- Parents/guardians considering the use of a service animal for a student will be directed by school staff to this policy and accompanying administrative procedure for direction.

APPROVED: Regular Meeting of the Board

AUTHORIZED BY: _____
Chair of the Board