
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 430 ASSISTANCE DOGS IN SCHOOLS

Assistance Dogs are trained to assist children and adults with their daily living activities and provide physical safety and emotional support. Use of an Assistance Dog by a student with special needs, in school or on District property, may be approved by the District when it has been determined by the District that it helps develop independence or when the student requires such use to have equitable access to the services, programs or activities offered by the school, and when the District's criteria have been met to the satisfaction of the Board of Education.

Definitions

As used in this procedure, "Assistance Dogs" include:

- Autism Support Dogs – Dogs trained as assistants for persons with autism.
- Hearing Dogs – Dogs that alert individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to specific sounds.
- Seizure Response Dogs – Dogs trained to provide emergency response for individuals with epilepsy.
- Service Dogs – Dogs trained to assist individuals who utilize a wheelchair (as defined in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act)
- Guide Dogs – Dogs trained as guide for a blind or visually impaired person (as defined in the BC Guide Dog and Service Dog Act)

Criteria

A student may be eligible to receive the support of an Assistance Dog if they have a disability or diverse ability (e.g. Chronic Health Condition, Visual/Hearing Impairment, Autism Spectrum Disorder), as defined by the British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care. The Assistance Dog must be trained and certified by a training school accredited by either or both the International Guide Dog Federation ("IGDF") or Assistance Dogs International ("ADI") or certified by the Justice Institute of British Columbia. In all cases, the dog/team should be able to present the British Columbia Guide Dog and Assistance Dog Provincial ID Card. The introduction of the Assistance Dog to the school community must not create barriers to other students' learning.

Parent/Guardian Responsibility

1. Provide a letter or recommendation from an "appropriate professional" confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need, including a recommendation for the use of an Assistance Dog.
2. Provide a certificate of Training for the Assistance Dog from an organization accredited by either the International Guide Dog Federation or Assistance Dogs International.

Related Legislation: Nil

Cross References: Policy 608-Assistance Dogs in Schools, Autism Support Dogs, Assistance Dogs International Inc., BC and Alberta Guide Dog Services, Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, Guide Animal Act of BC 1

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3. Pay for all financial implications incurred by the School District and/or school regarding the use and care of the service (e.g. appropriate training for School District staff members)
4. Annually provide the School District with proof of a municipal dog license and proof of up-to-date vaccinations provided by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine confirming that the Assistance Dog is in good health.
5. Arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog, including at least one bio-break procedure per day and providing an appropriate kennel and water bowl.

School District/ School Responsibilities

1. Ensure that the use of an Assistance Dog is consistent with the needs or recommendations of the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).
2. Arrange a case conference with parents/guardians/caregivers, classroom teacher(s), appropriate Student Services staff, a representative from Assistance Dogs International or other Service provider, the student (when appropriate), other consultants (if necessary), and the District Principal of Student Services to discuss and develop a plan to determine:
 - a) The purpose and function of the Assistance Dog.
 - b) Who will accompany and handle the Assistance Dog outside.
 - c) The personal care and physical needs of the Assistance Dog including:
 - The safest and most environmentally sound place for the Assistance Dog to relieve itself.
 - Removal and disposal of animal waste.
 - Provision of a suitable container for waste.
 - Considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather.
 - d) Classroom considerations such as seating arrangements.
 - e) Any necessary changes in routine and procedures and program changes.
 - f) Arrangements for the Assistance Dog to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site prior to commencement of services.
 - g) A transition plan for the Assistance Dog and the student.
 - h) A timetable for the introduction for the Assistance Dog to the school and class and for the training of the student's school team (Principal, Teacher(s), Educational Assistants, etc.)
 - i) Rules of conduct around the Assistance Dog for students, staff and the public.
 - j) Disseminating and regulating such rules.

Related Legislation: Nil

Cross References: Policy 608-Assistance Dogs in Schools, Autism Support Dogs, Assistance Dogs International Inc., BC and Alberta Guide Dog Services, Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, Guide Animal Act of BC 2

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3. The following letters or information shall be forwarded home and to all students attending the school to inform:
 - a. The school community of the arrival of the Assistance Dog, its purpose, role and regulations regarding the existence of the Assistance Dog at the school.
 - b. The students in any of the classes where the Assistance Dog will be present to elicit information concerning allergies or extreme phobias from the students' parents/guardians/caregivers.
 - c. The students who will be sharing transportation where the Assistance Dog will be present.
 - d. Retain all letters regarding the Assistance Dog in the student's confidential file.
4. Inform all staff including teachers, Education Assistants, custodians, support staff, volunteers, Parents' Advisory Council and Health and Safety representatives of the presence of an Assistance Dog(s).
5. Liaise with the District Principal of Student Services to resolve any specific concerns or issues raised regarding the presence of an Assistance Dog.
6. Arrange for demonstrations from Assistance Dogs International or another certified Assistance Dog organization for the student body, staff and the community as required to provide education and awareness of Assistance Dogs in schools.
7. Contact the Transportation Department regarding any transportation requirements.
8. Revise emergency procedures as required to include the Assistance Dog, such as evacuations, and notify the Fire Department regarding the existence of the Assistance Dog.

Limiting, Removing or Excluding Assistance Dogs from School

The School District may limit, remove or exclude from school facilities or property any Assistance Dog for reasons it deems appropriate. Examples of such include:

- The Assistance Dog poses a direct threat to the health or safety of an employee, student or others at the school, causes a significant disruption of school activities or otherwise jeopardizes the safe operation of the school or a school event. Examples of such include, but are not limited to:
 - The Assistance Dog does not urinate or defecate in appropriate/designated locations.
 - The Assistance Dog solicits unwanted attention toward any member of the student body or school personnel.
 - The Assistance Dog vocalizes unnecessarily (e.g. barking, growling or whining).
 - The Assistance Dog shows aggression towards people or other animals.

Related Legislation: Nil

Cross References: Policy 608-Assistance Dogs in Schools, Autism Support Dogs, Assistance Dogs International Inc., BC and Alberta Guide Dog Services, Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, Guide Animal Act of BC 3

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- The Assistance Dog solicits or steals food or other items from the student body or school personnel.
- The Assistance Dog is unable to perform reliably the service for which it has been approved.
- The Assistance Dog is not under the full control of the student with the disability or the designated employee.
- The Assistance Dog is a public health threat as a result of being infested with parasites or having a communicable disease of the skin, mouth or eyes.
- The Assistance Dog is unclean and unsanitary.
- The Assistance Dog's presence significantly impairs the learning of students.
- The Assistance Dog's presence fundamentally alters the nature of any school programs.
- The student or the student's parents fail to provide or maintain current documentation required by this procedure.
- The student or the student's parents fail to abide by the additional conditions of the terms of an individual education plan regarding their Assistance Dog.

Transportation of the Assistance Dog

In determining the necessity of an Assistance Dog for a student with a disability at school, the district may need to provide direction for transporting the student and the Assistance Dog.

1. Training:
 - The driver and, if applicable, the bus assistant should meet with the Assistance Dog's owner. The owner is responsible for providing information to the driver and bus assistant regarding critical commands needed for daily interaction and emergency/evacuation.
 - The Assistance Dog's owner should provide an orientation to students riding the bus with the Assistance Dog regarding the Dog's functions and how students should interact with the Dog.
 - The Assistance Dog should practice the bus evacuation drills with the student.
2. Loading/Unloading:
 - The Assistance Dog should board the bus by the steps, not on a lift.
3. Seating Location:
 - The Assistance Dog should be positioned on the floor, at the student's feet.
 - A representative of the Transportation Department will meet with the Assistance Dog's owner to determine whether the Assistance Dog should be secured on the bus with a tether or harness.

Related Legislation: Nil

Cross References: Policy 608-Assistance Dogs in Schools, Autism Support Dogs, Assistance Dogs International Inc., BC and Alberta Guide Dog Services, Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, Guide Animal Act of BC 4

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Restrictions and Off-Limits for Assistance Dogs

The School District imposes some restrictions of Assistance Dogs for safety reasons. Assistance Dogs may be excluded or have limited access to certain areas of school facilities or certain programs for safety reasons.

Areas or programs which may be considered off-limits for Assistance Dogs include, but are not limited to Laboratories, mechanical rooms, custodial closets, food preparation areas, areas where protective clothing is necessary, areas which have exposed sharp metal cutting or other sharp objects which may pose a threat to the Assistance Dog's safety, areas with high levels of dust and areas where there is moving machinery.

The determination to deny or limit the access of an Assistance Dog to specific programs or areas of that school facility will be on a case-by-case basis.

Staff Assistance Dogs

The District recognizes the benefit dogs can have on students. There may be District staff who wish to bring an Assistance Dog into a school. For safety reasons, Staff Assistance Dogs must be accredited assistance dogs. Staff who wish to bring an Assistance Dog to school shall follow the following procedure:

1. A staff member may provide a written request to the principal of the school and the Assistant Superintendent to bring a Staff Assistance Dog into the School. The written request shall include the information regarding:
 - a. Identifying the school where the staff member shall bring the Staff Assistance Dog.
 - b. Consultation with the school community regarding bringing a Staff Assistance Dog into the school.
 - c. How the Staff Assistance Dog will:
 - Support students.
 - Improve instruction to students.
 - Improve learning for students.
 - Provide emotional support to students.
2. A Staff Assistance Dog must be accredited by the Pacific Assistance Dogs Society ("Staff Assistance Dog").
3. A staff member typically means non-classroom based staff and includes administrative staff, school counsellors, and youth workers.
4. The principal of the school and the District Principal of Student Services must provide written authorization to the staff member before the staff member may bring a Staff Assistance Dog into the school. The authorization is only valid in the school listed in the request.

Related Legislation: Nil

Cross References: Policy 608-Assistance Dogs in Schools, Autism Support Dogs, Assistance Dogs International Inc., BC and Alberta Guide Dog Services, Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, Guide Animal Act of BC 5

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5. If a staff member moves schools within the District, they will be required to issue a separate request and seek a new authorization before bringing in a Staff Assistance Dog to the new school.
6. The school and/or district will not be responsible for expenses related to the training, feeding, grooming or care related to the staff owned Assistance Dog.

Conflicting Disabilities

Employees, students, and parents/guardians/caregivers of a student with medical issues that are impacted by dogs (such as respiratory issues) should contact the school principal if they have a concern about exposure to an Assistance Dog. They will be required to provide medical documentation that identifies the disability and the need for an accommodation. The principal will facilitate a process to resolve the conflict that considers the conflicting needs/accommodations of all persons involved.

Appeal Process

As per [Policy 390 – Resolving Concerns](#), the Board of Education believes that when a parent/guardian/caregiver has a concern about the action or decision of any employee, their concern should be first channeled through the employee and then the principal of the school. If resolution is not reached at the school level, a concern may be forwarded to the appropriate Assistant Superintendent before being referred to the Superintendent for consideration.

Pursuant to Section 11 of the *BC School Act* and Board [Bylaw 4: Appeal Procedure](#), a student and/or the student's parent/guardian/caregiver may appeal disciplinary action taken by Board personnel that they believe significantly affects the education, health or safety of the student, once the above steps have been considered.

Reference:

Autism Support Dogs

<http://www.autismsupportdogs.org>

Assistance Dogs International, Inc.

<http://www.assistancedogsinternational.org>

BC and Alberta Guide Dog Services

<http://www.bcguidedog.com>

Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind

<http://www.guidedog.org>

Related Legislation: Nil

Cross References: Policy 608-Assistance Dogs in Schools, Autism Support Dogs, Assistance Dogs International Inc., BC and Alberta Guide Dog Services, Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind, Guide Animal Act of BC 6

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