



Certified Service Animals

Administrative Procedure 1.B.55

1.0 School Administration
1.B. Students

Board Governance Policy Cross Reference: 1, 3, 10

Legal Reference: *The Disabilities Rights Act; The Public Access Law; The Human Rights Code (Manitoba) 9(2); Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; Public Schools Act, 1, 41(1) (a), 58.9(1), 259 (1); MB Administrative Handbook Topic R4: Right to Attend School, Appropriate Education Regulations 72; Appropriate Educational Programming; Disabilities Rights Act*

Date Adopted: December 2012

Date Amended: March 2016, January 2019, August 2022

Evergreen School Division supports the philosophy of inclusion and recognizes that a certified service animal, when well trained or supported can support increased safety, independence, social bonding and self control for individuals with a disability.

Evergreen School Division supports the use of a certified service animal in schools as long as the appropriate planning and preparation has taken place prior to the implementation of the program and expectations regarding behaviour and care are being met.

Criteria/Guidelines

1. Evergreen School Division will not assume responsibility for, or take custody or control of, the care or feeding of any certified service animal. The parent/guardian of a student that requires the use of a certified service animal assumes custody and control of the animal and shall be liable for any damage to persons, premises, property, or facilities caused by the service animal, including, but not limited to, clean up and stain removal.

Need for a Certified Service Animal in the School

1. A certified service animal is not the same as a companion animal or therapy animal. A certified service animal is a recognized working animal and strict guidelines apply for the access, handling, and interaction with these animals. It is important to differentiate between a certified service animal and a companion/therapy animal that is being requested. A request for a “companion/therapy” animal can be refused (**see 1.B.195 Therapy Animals in School**) and a “service animal” cannot unless the proper authorization, planning and preparation are not done in advance.
2. Approval for the use of a certified service animal in Evergreen School Division can only be granted by the Evergreen School Division Board of Trustees.
 - a. Applications are to be completed by parents and submitted to the Superintendent for presentation to the Board.
 - b. This needs to be done *a minimum of six (6) months* prior to the implementation of a program.
 - c. Students who are transferring into the Division that already have a certified service animal in place as part of a student specific plan are required to provide the Division with *a minimum of one (1) month* notice prior to starting in the Division

3. Superintendent (or designate) may contact the identified professional animal training centre for further information about placement and training. If the training centre feels the placement of the animal in the school setting is not suitable, the placement must be reviewed and/or revised.

Responsibilities for Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

1. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must make a **formal application** to the school Principal. The required documentation includes the following:
 - a. 1.B.55A **Certified Service Animal Request**;
 - b. A letter from a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons/College of Psychologists of Manitoba or similar provincial organization confirming the diagnosis of an accepted exceptionality and the recommendation for the use of a certified service animal;
 - c. A certificate of training for the animal from a recognized professional training center;
 - d. A letter stating a certified service animal has been placed with the child and the date of formal certified service animal team recognition from a recognized professional training center;
 - e. Current documentation that states the animal is in good health, properly licensed and has an up-to-date record of all vaccinations;
 - f. Proof of liability insurance; and
 - g. A letter from parent/guardian outlining the needs of their child and the benefits of using a certified service animal as part of their child's programming.
2. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) assume sole financial responsibility relating to provision, use and care of the service animal.
3. At the discretion of the Division, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be responsible for the costs and provision of a fully-trained animal handler to help with the initial implementation or any re-training sessions that may be required. This requirement applies to students with a certified service animal already in place who transfer into the division.
4. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are required to support the child and the school by upholding the following expectations:
 - a. The child will care for the animal; and
 - b. That the animal will be with the child during the school day.

Responsibilities for the School Principal

1. Upon receipt of a request from a parent(s)/guardian(s) for the use of a certified animal in school, consult with/inform Division staff and share appropriate documents with the family.
2. Inform school staff members (teaching staff, educational support staff, custodial and secretarial staff, etc.) of a request to have a service animal in the school. Share relevant information and request input/information that will assist in the entry process.
3. Review forms submitted by the parent(s)/guardian(s) for accuracy and completion.
4. Schedule and chair a meeting with the parents, a representative from the animal training facility, the

classroom teacher(s), the resource teacher, the Student Services Administrator, and the support staff who work with the student.

- a. The purpose of the meeting is to review the student's specific plan, strengths, needs and required accommodations including the type of service the service animal will provide. The services provided by the service animal should be, or become, part of the goals of the student specific plan.
 - b. Discussions will include other relevant information such as:
 - i. Health and safety considerations (including severe allergies and staff or students with asthma).
 - ii. The potential impact of the involvement of the service animal on the school community.
 - iii. Animal care requirements.
 - iv. Handling routines and responsibilities.
 - v. Guidelines for staff and students, other student issues.
 - vi. Transportation to and from school.
 - vii. The role of and communication with parents.
 - viii. The designation of a staff dog handler/alternate in the school.
5. If a decision to approve the request is made, the Principal will attend to communication/awareness, consistency, routines, communication, staff training, school assemblies, and community notification. Prior to public information sharing with the school community, the Principal will provide these letters to the family of the student requiring the service animal.
 6. School division administration may inform relevant employee groups and/or the Workplace Safety & Health Committee that a service animal will be in the school.
 7. The Principal will designate signs to be placed on entrance doors to inform school visitors of the presence of a service animal.
 8. The Principal will review the school Emergency Response Plan and notify the local fire department of the existence of a service animal.
 9. The Principal will arrange:
 - a. Staff training by the dog training facility; and
 - b. demonstrations from the dog training facility for students on the rules of conduct around service dogs.
 10. The Principal, with feedback from staff, will monitor the integration of the service animal in the school and respond/make planning adjustments as necessary.

Transportation of a Certified Service Animal

1. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are responsible for transporting the animal to and from school or walking with the animal unless it is determined that the Division will transport the child and the certified service animal.
2. If the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) wish to have the animal transported on the school bus, this request needs to be made with *a minimum of three (3) months notice* as the following is required:
 - a. A Personal Transportation Plan, developed by the school in consultation with the Division's Student Services, and submitted to the Transportation Department.

- b. A protocol for handling the certified service animal on the bus, developed and implemented in collaboration of the certified animal's trainer/handler.
- c. Appropriate training is provided for all ESD staff involved in the transportation of the student and service animal.
- d. Confirmation the certified service animal will be under the control of student at all times when on the bus, including entering and exiting the bus.
- e. Other students transported in the bus receive training to ensure that they are informed and fully aware of the role and function of the certified service animal and the appropriate behaviour required when on the vehicle/bus.
- f. An evacuation plan for the bus is developed and practiced.

Exclusion of the Certified Service Animal

1. Evergreen School Division retains discretion to *exclude or remove* the certified service animal from the school or school property if:
 - a. The presence of the certified service animal poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others.
 - b. The certified service animal significantly disrupts or interferes with the instruction program, school activities, or student.
 - c. The presence of the certified service animal would require a fundamental alteration of any school program.
 - d. The student or handler is unable to fully control the animal.
 - e. The student or handler fails to appropriately care for the animal.
 - f. The parent(s)/guardian(s) fail to provide the required documentation.
 - g. The certified service animal fails to consistently perform the function(s)/service(s) for which it has been trained and brought to school.
 - h. There has been a material change in the circumstances that led to the original approval of the use of the animal in school.
2. If the decision is made to not allow service animal, the parent/guardian, or student if over the age of 18, may choose to appeal. See Procedure **1.A.10 Appeal Process**.