



## **IJ – R - Service Animal Policy Regulations**

### **Protocols for Service Animals in Schools**

#### ***Handler***

The handler is the individual who is trained to manage the service animal's performance of support services. It is the expectation that the student, 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.

#### ***Parent's Responsibilities***

1. Provide a letter to the school principal requesting permission for a service animal and outlining the benefits of having a service animal attend school with their child.
2. Provide a letter from a qualified professional (physician, psychologist) confirming the diagnosis of a recognized special need, including a recommendation for the use of a service animal.
3. Provide a certificate of training for the service animal from a certified training centre, or equivalent training facility, where appropriate (i.e.: a guide dog for the visually impaired).
4. Pay for any financial implications regarding the use and care of the service animal.
5. Annually, provide the school with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, a municipal service animal license (if needed), and confirmation that the service animal is in good health.
6. Arrange for the personal care and physical needs of the service animal, including a once a day bio-break procedure (attending to physical needs of the animal).

#### ***Principal's Responsibilities***

1. Ensure that the use of a service animal is consistent with the needs or recommendations as outlined in the Student Specific Planning process.
2. Consult with the Superintendent and the Director of Student Services to arranging a case conference.
3. Arrange a case conference with parents/guardians, classroom teacher(s), appropriate student services staff, the Director of Student Services, the student (when appropriate), a representative from the animal training centre (if appropriate), to discuss and develop a plan to determine:
  - a) the purpose and function of the service animal
  - b) who will accompany and handle the service animal during non-services times
  - c) personal care and physical needs of the service animal
  - d) safest and most environmentally sound place for the service animal to relieve itself
  - e) removal and disposal of animal waste
  - f) provision of a suitable container for waste that the animal handler can access
  - g) considerations for seasonal changes and inclement weather



h) classroom considerations such as seating arrangements

4. Develop a transition plan for the service animal and the student that will:

- a) provide for any necessary changes in routine and procedures, and program changes
- b) arrange for the service animal to visit the school without students present in order to familiarize it with the school site
- c) provide a timetable for the introduction of the service animal to the school and class, and for the training of the student's school team (principal, teacher(s), education assistant(s), etc.)
- d) prepare staff and students with allergies/fears, cultural sensitivity issues

5. Provide training for staff and students on rules of conduct around the service animal for students.

6. Forward letters to parents of students in the school:

- a) to inform them of the arrival of the working service animal, its purpose, rules and regulations regarding the presence of the service animal at the school
- b) to elicit information concerning allergies, extreme phobias, or cultural considerations
- c) to inform them of the transportation arrangements where the student and the service animal are sharing transportation with other students

7. Retain all letters regarding the service animal in the student's cumulative file for a period of one year, or until superseded.

8. Inform all staff, this includes teachers, educational assistants, custodians, all support staff, volunteers, school council, union representatives, and health and safety representatives of the presence of a service animal.

9. Liaise with the Director of Student Services to resolve any specific concerns or issues raised regarding the presence of a service animal.

10. Arrange for demonstrations from *National Service Dogs* or another certified service animal organization for the student body, staff, and the community as required to provide education and awareness of service animals in schools.

11. Contact the school division transportation department regarding any transportation requirements. A transportation plan will be completed by the school/division team in consultation with the Supervisor of Operations and the Supervisor of Transportation. The transportation plan must include:

- a) location of the service animal during transport
- b) a bus evacuation plan for the service animal is developed and practiced
- c) plan for training the other students and spare drivers on the bus that ensures the role and function of the trained service animal and procedures for handling the service animal on the bus

12. Revise emergency procedures as required to include the service animal, such as evacuations, and notification to the fire department regarding the existence of the service animal.



13. Post signs on each entry door of the school to advise visitors of the presence of a working service animal.

**How is a service animal identified?**

Service animals may wear a distinctive harness or vest and should be under the care and control of their owner/handler at all times. The animal should be harnessed, leashed, or tethered when working unless these devices interfere with the work or task that it performs, or if the individual's disability prevents the use of these devices. In those instances, the individual relying on the animal must maintain control of the animal through voice, signals, or other means.

**Sample Letter to Families with Children in the Classroom**

**Insert School/Divisional Letterhead**

Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This letter is to inform you that there will be a service animal in our school helping one of our students. The service animal will be in your child's classroom effective **INSERT DATE**.

Service animals are trained and are able to assist with many of the routine activities which pose challenges for some students. The student's right to have a service animal is protected under The Human Rights Code of Manitoba.

An upcoming information session for parents/guardians on **INSERT DATE** will offer more information on how the service animal will be integrated into the school setting.

Students will participate in school-wide assembly on **INSERT DATE** to assist with the integration of the service animal and how the animal will fit into the daily routines of all students.

The students in the classroom and on the school bus will also receive more direct instruction and training as to the proper procedures and conduct when around the service animal. They will be informed that the service animal is a working animal and not a pet while at school.

We anticipate the service animal being of benefit to the student's learning and we look forward to this new addition to our school and school community.

Thank you for your understanding and support. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at **INSERT SCHOOL PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL**.

Sincerely,

Principal



## Sample Letter to Families with Children on the Bus

### Insert Divisional Letterhead

Date

Dear Parents/Guardian

This letter is to inform you that one of our bus students has a service animal. **NAME OF SERVICE ANIMAL** is a **DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE ANIMAL** will be accompanying the student to and from school and working with the student through the school day.

Staff will be trained how to handle and work with **NAME OF SERVICE ANIMAL** and the student.

**NAME OF SERVICE ANIMAL** will be riding to and from school on our school bus beginning **INSERT DATE** and we would like to check with all our bus students' parents/guardians to see if there are any allergies that we need to be aware so an appropriate seating plan can be developed.

We are pleased to be able to have **NAME OF SERVICE ANIMAL** as an additional resource for our student. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me at **INSERT PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL**.

Sincerely,

Supervisor of Operations

Supervisor of Transportation