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**Board Governance Policy Cross Reference:** [1](#), [12](#), [13](#)

**Administrative Procedures Cross Reference:**

[Appropriate Educational Programming and Inclusion](#)

**Form Cross Reference:**

[Certified Service Animal Registration Agreement](#)

[Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Animal in a School](#)

[Management Plan for the Care of a Service Animal](#)

[Request for Approval for the Use of a Service Animal](#)

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**Legal/Regulatory Reference:**

[Appropriate Educational Programming MR 155/2005](#)

[The Disabilities Rights Act](#)

[The Human Rights Code \(Manitoba\)](#)

[The Public Schools Act](#) 41(1)

[The Service Animals Protection Act \(Manitoba\)](#)

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The Interlake School Division (ISD) recognizes that today's classrooms reflect our diverse communities and include a combination of student needs, learning styles and cultural backgrounds. The Division is committed to the rights of all students to participate in educational programming that, within available resources, will maximize the opportunity for students to achieve their individualized learning outcomes. The Division accommodates the use of a certified service animal in schools to support learners as long as the appropriate planning and preparation has taken place prior to the implementation of the program.

A certified service animal is not a pet. A certified service animal is a recognized working animal that has been trained to assist children and adults who have a physical or developmental disability with their

daily living activities which include tasks, but are not limit to, providing balance and stability, retrieving items and pulling wheelchairs. There are strict guidelines that apply to their access, handling, and interaction. Service animals must wear a distinctive harness/saddlebag or vest and should be under control at all times. The animal should be harnessed, leashed or tethered unless these devices interfere with the work or task that they perform, or if the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In those instances, the individual relying on the animal must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal or other means.

When parents/guardians approach a school requesting the use of a service animal for their child, the Principal must determine if the request is for a service animal or a companion animal. These procedures apply only to service animals.

Decisions regarding the use of service animals by students in the school environment are made on a case-by-case basis. All circumstances of a particular request, including the individual needs of the student being assisted by the animal and the needs of other students and staff, will be considered. Where necessary in the decision-making process, the rights and needs of one person may have to be balanced against the rights and needs of another.

Entry of service animals is decided after extensive consultation and in accordance with the procedures listed below. The request will be reviewed and approved by the Principal, the Student Services Administrator and the Superintendent's Department.

### **Parent/Guardian Responsibilities**

1. To initiate the process of having a service animal assist a student in school, speak with the Principal. The Principal will provide parents/guardians with a copy of [Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Animal in a School](#).
2. Submit the request in writing using the request form in Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Animal in a School.
3. Provide a letter from a relevant approved health care professional i.e. physician, psychiatrist or psychologist, confirming the student's diagnosis as well as a recommendation for a service animal.
4. Provide a letter from an accredited dog training program such as membership in Assistance Dogs International (ADI) or the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF), stating that a service animal has been placed with the child and provide a Certificate of Training for the animal with the services that it has been trained to perform.
5. Provide the school with proof of up-to-date vaccinations, a municipal Service Dog license, and confirmation the service animal is in good health.
6. Assume financial responsibility relating to the use and care of the service animal.

## Principal Responsibilities

1. Consult with the Student Services Administrator and the Superintendent's Department prior to planning the school entry process.
2. Upon receipt of the request form in the [Information for Parents/Guardians Requesting a Service Animal in a School](#), inform all school staff members (i.e. teaching staff, educational support staff, admin assistant, custodial staff, etc.) of the request to have a service animal in the school. Their input and information will assist the Principal in the school entry process.
3. Schedule a meeting with the parents/guardian, a representative from the animal training facility, the classroom teacher(s), the learning support teacher, the Student Services Administrator, and support staff who work with the student. The purpose of the meeting is to review the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), description of 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 IEP. Discussions will include other relevant information such as:
  - a) health and safety considerations (including severe allergies, and staff or students with asthma);
  - b) the potential impact of the involvement of the service animal on the school community;
  - c) animal care requirements;
  - d) handling routines and responsibilities;
  - e) guidelines for staff and students, other student issues;
  - f) transportation to and from school;
  - g) the role of and communication with parents/guardians;
  - h) and the designation of a staff dog handler/alternate in the school.
4. Complete a [Management Plan for the Care of a Service Animal](#) and have parent/guardian sign.
5. If a decision to approve the request is made, attention to awareness, consistency, routines, communication, staff training, school assemblies, and community notification are required.
  - a) An information session for interested school community members may be held to inform them, and to receive feedback or relevant information. The Principal may invite the parents/guardians of the student requiring the service animal to participate in the information session.
  - b) Prior to any information session, letters must be mailed to parents/guardians of the school community and parents/guardians of children in the classroom/school bus. (see Appendix A and B).
6. Division administration may inform relevant employee groups and/or the Workplace Safety and Health Committee that a service dog will be in the school.
7. Contact the Transportation Department regarding transportation needs. A personalized transportation plan should be developed for the IEP.

8. Place signs on entrance doors to inform school visitors of the presence of a service animal.
9. Review the school Emergency Preparedness Plan. Notify the local fire department of the existence of a service animal.
10. Arrange for training of staff by the dog training facility.
11. Arrange for demonstration from the dog training facility and/or parents on the rules of conduct around service dogs.
12. Monitor the entry of the service animal regularly and review on an annual basis.

### **Exclusions**

Where the use of a service animal in a school has been approved, the animal may be excluded from access to the premises only where:

- a) exclusion is required by a statute;
- b) the service animal is of a breed that is prohibited by law or municipal bylaw (i.e. Pit Bull Terriers, Staffordshire Bull Terriers);
- c) there is a risk of the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of the service animal (consideration should be given to options available prior to exclusion of the animal - an example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the service animal in which case the situation should be fully analyzed and all measures to eliminate the risk should be considered i.e. creating distance between the individuals concerned, making reasonable alterations to schedules, etc.);
- 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 service animal fails to consistently perform the functions or services for which it has been trained and brought to the school;
- g) the presence of the certified service animal would require a fundamental alteration of any school program;
- h) the certified service animal significantly disrupts or interferes with the instruction program, school activities, or students;
- i) there has been a material change in the circumstances that led to the original approval of the use of the animal in school.

## Appendix A

### Sample Letter to School Community

Insert School 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 our school effective (insert date).

Service animals are trained and recognized by an accredited training facility 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.

There will be an upcoming information session for parents/guardians at the school on (insert date) to assist with your understanding of how the service animal will be integrated into the school. As well, a school wide assembly will be held for all students to help them identify with the service animal and how it will fit into the daily routines of all students. They will be instructed as to the proper procedure regarding the animal and that the animal is a "working" service 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).

Sincerely,

Principal

## Appendix B

### Sample Letter to Families with Children in the Classroom (and on the School Bus)

Insert School 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 recognized by an accredited training facility, 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 animal will be integrated into the school setting.

Students will participate in a 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 procedure 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).

Sincerely,

Principal