



205.1AP Service Dogs in School

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AMENDED:
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DEFINITION:

Buffalo Trail Public Schools is committed to the delivery of high quality education programs, supports and services that allow students with diverse needs to maximize their learning and achievement. The Division recognizes that the diverse needs of some students may require unique accommodations(s). These accommodations, linked to the student's IPP, may include the use of service dogs.

Buffalo Trail Public Schools is also committed to ensuring it operates within the legal mandate of all legislation in meeting the needs of its students. This includes the School Act and the Human Rights Act, specifically the *Alberta Service Dogs Act* (January 1, 2009), which legally recognized all service dogs. Albertans with disabilities who use qualified service dogs now have access to all public places in the province.

LEGAL REFERENCE:

- Section 45, School Act
- Section 33, Education Act (New 2012)
- Alberta Service Dogs Act
- Alberta Service Dog Qualification Regulation
- Alberta Blind Persons' Rights Act
- Alberta Human Rights Act

CROSS-REFERENCE:

- [205.1AP Exhibit 1 - Letter of Parent/Guardian Understanding](#)
- [205.1AP Exhibit 2 - Letter to the School Community](#)
- [205.1AP Exhibit 3 - Letter to Families with Children in the Classroom](#)
- [205.1AP Exhibit 4 - Principal Checklist](#)
- [205.1AP Exhibit 5 - Transition Protocol](#)

PROCEDURES:

1. A service dog is defined a “dog trained as a guide for a disabled person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations. (*Service Dog Act*) For the purposes of this policy, the service dog definition would include dogs that have been trained by a recognized program such as Canine Vision Dog Guides, Special Skills Dog Guides, Hearing Ear Dog Guides, Seizure Response Dog Guides, and Autism Assistance Dog Guides, etc.
2. Parent/guardian must request in writing to the School, permission to use a Service Dog.
3. Prior to the transition of a service dog to a school, the principal will work with parents/guardians to provide:
 - 3.1. provide a copy of medical certification that the service dog is required to assist the student to attend school.
 - 3.2. a copy of the service dog Team Identification Card issued by the Government of Alberta. All financial costs to obtain this card are the sole responsibility of the family.
 - 3.3. a copy of the service dog Identification Card will be placed in the cumulative file;
 - 3.4. assure parent/guardians and/or service dog Organization have provided evidence of adequate insurance of \$2,000,000 .00 for general liability;
 - 3.5. for the responsibility of care of the service dog. This includes the need for portable kennel, vest, leash, “bio-breaks”, disposal of waste, provision of storage food and water;
 - 3.6. training for the student’s school team and bus driver(s) by the service dog organization and to educate the student body in the school and those on the bus on the role of the service dog and on the rules of conduct concerning the dog. This process will be ongoing as staff changes, grade changes, and other circumstances warrant it;
 - 3.7. signage (generally provided by the service dog organization) alerting visitors/emergency service providers to the service dogs’ presence; and
 - 3.8. indication of who will accompany and handle the service dog both inside and outside the school and what arrangements have been made with regards to alternate handlers when necessary.
4. When an administrator receives a request to have a service dog accompany a student to school, the administrator will:
 - 4.1. inform the Director of Inclusive Learning of the request;
 - 4.2. arrange a case conference involving:
 - 4.2.1. parents/guardians,
 - 4.2.2. teachers
 - 4.2.3. classroom assistants,
 - 4.2.4. Transportation Director, if appropriate,
 - 4.2.5. a representative of the service dog organization, if appropriate, and
 - 4.2.6. appropriate Inclusive Learning personnel to discuss the following:
 - 4.2.6.1. review the purpose and function of the service dog in relation to successful learning and/or safety for the student;
 - 4.2.6.2. notification and involvement of staff;
 - 4.2.6.3. clarify all responsibilities of the family, school and Division;
 - 4.2.6.4. transportation of the student and service dog, if appropriate.

5. Development of a comprehensive transition plan for the introduction of the service dog which may involve the use of social stories, visits by the service dog to the school/classroom including:
 - 5.1. inform school staff, school council representatives and parents of the arrival of a service dog to the school;
 - 5.2. send a specific letter home to the parents of students who will be in any of the classes where the service dog will possibly be present in case of allergies, anxieties or other concerns;
 - 5.3. may arrange an assembly for the student body involving representatives from the service dog organization, the parent and possibly the handler to explain the role of the service dog;
 - 5.4. explore other concerns including interference with delivery of an educational program, possible changes to in-class routines and procedures, increased demands on staff, other children and staff who are allergic to dogs, recognition of children with fear of dogs and other animals, cultural sensitivities to groups that will not share space with a dog;
6. The service dog transition into the school will be finalized by the Director of Inclusive Learning based upon the recommendation of the school administrator and a review of the documentation pertaining to the:
 - 6.1. student's educational needs;
 - 6.2. fulfillment of family responsibilities;
 - 6.3. fulfillment of school and Division responsibilities to all stakeholders, including liability; and
 - 6.4. eligibility for transportation, the Human Rights Code and the Blind Person's Rights Act establish the right for the service dog to be allowed to accompany the student on the bus.
7. Staff, students/parents of a student with medical issues that are impacted by dogs (such as respiratory diseases) should contact the principal if they have a concern about exposure to a service dog. The staff member, student/parents of student will be asked 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.
8. Any student/parent of a student with a service dog or staff or parent/guardian of a student who is aggrieved by the principal's decision may appeal that decision to the Superintendent or designate. That appeal must be in writing and provide detailed information regarding the basis of the appeal.
9. At the end of each year a comprehensive transition plan will be communicated to those who need to know.