

STUDENTS

Use of Service Animals in Schools

1.0 Objective

To ensure consideration and use of service animals in schools is aligned with the expectations of the Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC), Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Ministry of Education PPM 163.

2.0 Definitions

Accommodation means adjusting services, programs and practices to remove barriers and better respond to or address individual Human Rights Code related needs. The District has a legal duty to accommodate students' Human Rights Code related needs. This means providing accommodation that:

- most respects the dignity and individual needs of the student
- maximizes the student's integration, participation and independence.

Guide Dog means a dog trained as a guide for a blind person and having the qualifications prescribed by the regulations pursuant to the *Blind Persons' Rights Act*;

Service Animal for the purpose of this Procedure includes a therapy dog, companion animal, comfort animal and emotional support animal and includes a dog or other domesticated animal that may legally reside in an urban, residential home, that is not highly trained to perform particular tasks to assist with a student's disability-related needs, but provides emotional support (and/or companionship, calming influence) for a student with a disability-related mental health and/or psychological need and/or comfort during a difficult period.

Service Dog means a dog which has been certified after successfully completing a training program provided by an Accredited Training Organization.

3.0 Responsibilities

- 3.1 **Trustees:** The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction of the board and ensuring that policies are regularly updated to support the multi-year strategic plan. They are also responsible for ensuring the compliance of policies by the system through the annual review by the Director of Education (and designates). The Trustees set expectation that the District have policy guiding the use of service animals in schools as a foundation of compliance with PPM 163.
- 3.2 **Director of Education:** The operations of the District are the responsibility of the Director of Education (and designates) and include implementing measures to ensure compliance with this policy by all staff and in the provision of professional learning and training for staff to support implementation. The Director shall ensure that the District's procedure on the Use of Service Animals in Schools is compliant with PPM 163 and aligned with this related policy.

4.0 Policy

- 4.1 The Durham District School Board is committed to the learning of all students and provides a range of differentiated placements, programs and interventions to support student success. It is the policy of the Durham District School Board (DDSB), in accordance with its obligations pursuant to the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, to provide individualized accommodation to students with disabilities to enable them to have meaningful access to education services.
- 4.2 In circumstances where a parent/guardian or adult student requests to have the student's Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal accompany the student while attending school or a school-related event, each such request shall be reviewed individually by the DDSB considering the student's dignity, integration, independence and disability-related learning needs and the accommodations available to enable meaningful access to education.
- 4.3 Staff accommodation requests for use of a Service Animal shall follow same process of thorough considerations.
- 4.4 Pursuant to the *Education Act* and regulations, a school building is not a place to which the public is customarily admitted.
- 4.5 The process of accommodation shall also consider the competing human rights of other students and of staff; the impact of the Guide Dog, Service Dog or Service Animal on the learning environment; and the health and safety of all individuals who are or might be in the school, on school grounds or at a school-related event.
- 4.6 A Durham District School Board procedure will be in place to ensure the requirements of Ministry PPM 163 School Board Policies on Service Animals, based on the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, are addressed: Communication Plan (e.g., process of application, informing school community of presence of any service animals at the school), Process for Requests, Health Safety and Other Concerns, Roles and Responsibilities, Training and Review of School Board Service Animal processes and related data collection (requests, decisions and types of support).

5.0 References

5.1 Policies

Consultative Process
Policy Formation and Review

5.2 Procedures

Use of Service Animals in Schools

5.3 Other Documents

Ontario Human Rights Code
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
Ministry of Education PPM 163 Use of Service Animals in Schools

Appendix: None

Effective Date: Proposed Date: 2020/03/23