

# Toronto District School Board

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Operational Procedure PR604

Title: **USE OF SERVICE ANIMALS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

Adopted: April 6, 2010

Revised:

Reviewed: April 2012

Authorization: Executive Council

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## **1.0 OBJECTIVE**

To establish guidelines that will welcome all members of the school and broader community to our facilities by committing our staff and volunteers to providing services that respect the independence and dignity of people with disabilities, including but not limited to the use of service animals

## **2.0 RESPONSIBILITY**

Chief Employee Services Officer

## **3.0 DEFINITIONS**

*Board Property* is any real estate or asset owned and/or operated by the Board including schools, offices, storage facilities, etc.

*Readily apparent* is when it is obvious that an animal is a service animal by its appearance or by what it is doing. For example, it may be readily apparent that an animal is a service animal if it is wearing a harness, saddle bags, a sign that identifies it as a service animal or has a certificate or identification card from a service animal training school or an identification card from the Attorney General of Ontario. It may also be readily apparent if a person is using the animal to assist him or her in doing things, such as opening doors or retrieving items.

*Service Animal* is an animal that is being used because of a person's disability and this is either readily apparent (definition above) or is supported by a letter from a medical practitioner. Examples of service animals include dogs used by people who have vision loss, hearing alert animals for people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, and animals trained to alert an individual to an oncoming seizure and lead them to safety. The customer service standard's provisions also apply to animals providing other services to people with disabilities.

## 4.0 PROCEDURE

4.1. Supervisory officers, principals and managers will ensure that all staff, volunteers and others dealing with the public are properly trained in how to interact with people with disabilities who are accompanied by a service animal.

### 4.2. Access to Board Property

- (a) Any person with a disability who is accompanied by a service animal will be welcomed on Board property with his or her service animal and will be accompanied by the service animal while on the premises. Access will be in accordance with the normal security procedures.
- (b) This requirement applies only to those areas of the premises where the public or third parties customarily have access and does not include places or areas of the Board property where the public does not have access.
- (c) This procedure deals solely with the individual's right to be accompanied by a service animal. Access to classrooms for service animals used by students and staff is covered under separate procedures

### 4.3. Exclusion of Service Animal

- (a) A service animal can only be excluded from access to the premises where this is required by another law. Examples include the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* and the *Food and Safety Act*. The former Act prohibits service animals in places where food is prepared, processed, or handled (e.g. kitchen of school cafeteria or culinary arts classroom) although service dogs are permitted where food is served and sold, e.g. school cafeteria or lunchroom.
- (b) Where there is a risk to the health and safety of another person as a result of the presence of a service animal, consideration must be given to options available prior to the exclusion of a service animal. An example would be a situation where an individual has a severe allergy to the service animals. It is the Board's expectation that the situation be fully analyzed and all measures to eliminate the risk be considered, for example creating distance between the two individuals concerned, making reasonable alterations to schedules, etc.
- (c) A service animal can be excluded if it is of a breed that is prohibited by law. An example would be the *Ontario Dog Owners' Liability Act* which places restrictions on pit bull terriers.

### 4.4. Alternative Measures if Service Animal Must be Excluded

In the rare instance where a service animal must be excluded, the Board must make every effort to put alternative arrangement in place to provide the services required by the person with a disability. This could involve leaving the animal in a secure area where it is permitted by law and discussing with the person how best to serve them, for example a person with a vision disability might need someone (a member of staff or volunteer) to guide them.

4.5. When it is Necessary to Confirm an Animal is a Service Animal

- (a) Where an animal is not a trained guide dog and it is not readily apparent that the animal is a service animal, the school or board staff member may ask the person using the service animal for a letter from a physician or nurse confirming that the animal is needed because of a disability. The letter does not need to identify the disability, why the animal is needed, or how it is used.
- (b) Where the person using the service animal regularly attends at the school or board facility, the principal or departmental manager may request to keep a copy of the letter on file but only as long as required by the circumstances. Alternatively, the person using the service animal may be asked to bring a letter with them on occasions when they visit the premises. The principal or department manager shall preserve the confidentiality of the letter and information contained in the letter, and shall not use or disclose the letter or information except as provided for in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, cM556*, or as otherwise required by law.

## 5.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Policy P069, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service

*Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act* and the related Customer Service Standard  
Ontario Regulation 429/07, Accessibility Standards for Customer Service